

FIFTEEN
SERMONS

Preach'd on
Several Occasions.

By RICHARD DUKE, M. A. late Prebendary of Gloucester, Rector of Witney in Oxfordshire, and Chaplain in Ordinary to her Majesty.

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SERMON I.

ECCLESIASTES XI. I.

*Cast thy Bread upon the Waters,
for Thou shalt find it after many
days.*

IN these Words we have an Exhortation from the Royal Preacher to a generous, a diffusive, and disinterested Charity. And for an Encouragement to the performance of so noble, and withall so indispensable a Duty, there is a Promise annex'd to it of a Certain, tho' not always a speedy Reward; an Assurance that That Bread, which in the wretched Worldling's Eye seem'd to be lavishly squander'd away, and quite lost, and which the frank bestower himself gave without the least prospect or hopes of Return, yet shall certainly, tho'

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after many days be found again, shall surely at last come back into his own bosom with Interest and Encrease, either in this World or a better.

In the Text therefore there are plainly these two things to be consider'd,

1st, The Duty Enjoyn'd.

2^{dly}, The Reward Promis'd.

I. The Duty, in These Words, *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters*, which Expression being Figurative and very Comprehensive, has afforded room to the several Commentators upon the place, to give several Expositions of it, yet all of 'em very agreeable to the Truth, and very consistent with each Other. Which I shall therefore briefly offer, because from them we may form a right Understanding of the Nature and Qualifications of this Duty, and the manner in which it ought to be perform'd.

And their several Interpretations put together amount to this, that these Words import a Command that our Charity should be,

1st, Plentifull and Liberal.

2^{dly}, Willing and Chearfull.

3^{dly}, Universal and without Exception.

4^{bly}, Without Design or Hopes of Requital.

1st, Plenti-

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1st. Plentifull. The Word in the Text, *Cast thy Bread*, implying a Liberality even to Profuseness, a scattering our Benefits freely without measure or reserve, as it is express'd by the Psalmist, *He has dispers'd abroad, he has given to the Poor, his Righteousness endureth for ever*, or as God himself by his Servant Moses, Deuter. 15. 11. *I command Thee, Thou shalt Open thy Hand wide unto thy Brother, to thy Poor, and to thy Needy in the Land*. It is indeed impossible to determine precisely the Proportion of our Charity, nor can any general Rule be laid down, how much we ought to allot to this Use; Men's Circumstances being so different, that That may be a very noble Gift from One, that would be scandalously mean from Another, as the Widows two Mites were, by the Judgment of Our Saviour himself, esteem'd a greater Offering than all the Rich Men had cast into the Treasury, *tho' they Cast in Much*. Every Man therefore is left to his Own Discretion, and the Direction of his Own Conscience, as to the Measure of his Alms, tho' when he comes to deliberate upon this point, it will be ever more advisable and more safe to Err on the Liberal and Bountifull side, if there can be an Error in that, than on the Other; lest by a Judgment like that which fell on *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, by being partially Charitable

and doing his good Deeds by halves, he gain nothing by all that he niggardly gives, and perish for that which he unjustly detains.

2dly, Our Charity ought to be Willing and Chearfull. We should be *Ready to Give and Glad to Distribute*, as St. Paul speaks to Timothy, and as elsewhere he exhorts the Corinthians, that *Every Man give not grudgingly and of Necessity, for God loveth a Chearfull Giver.* He would not of old accept an Offering towards his Tabernacle, *Exod. 25. 2.* but of every Man that gave it willingly with his Heart; and again, *Exod. 35. 5.* But whosoever is of a Willing Heart, let Him bring it, an Offering of the Lord. And the same temper of Mind He requires in all that for his sake we bestow upon his Living Temples, his poor Servants. It was commanded to the Israelites, *Dent. 15. 10.* *Thou shalt surely give Him, thy Poor Brother, and thy Heart shall not be griev'd when Thou givest Him:* The Ready Compliance of the Will, and the Promptness and Alacrity of the Affections, are so Necessary and Essential to the Right Exercising of every Religious Duty, that it is no wonder that they should be the Very Life and Soul of This, the most Excellent of all Other Duties of a Christian. Nay, it is impossible to be truly Charitable, without being Pleas'd with being so, for tho' it might

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might be Enough *for a Jew*, that *His Heart should not be Griev'd*, the utmost that *Moses* commanded; yet it comes not up to the Dignity of the Christian, if his Heart is not *Delighted* too when He gives.

3dly, Our Charity ought to be Universal and without Exception. 'Tis *St. Paul's* advice, *As We have Opportunity Let us do good to All Men.* He adds indeed *Especially to the Household of Faith.* Which is highly Reasonable, and if a Christian and an Heathen, a Member of our Own and One of another Communion, or a Good and Less Good or Vicious Man stand at the same time in Equal Need of our Charity, and our Abilities will not reach to the Relief of both, there is no place for doubt to which the preference ought to be given. But This still does not take off our Obligation of extending our Bounty as far as our Power, and if That could stretch it self out to all Mankind, our Beneficence ought to do so too. There is None so Bad, but if he is in Real and Pressing Necessity, is a true and fit Object of our Compassion. Let the Person be what he will, his Wants give him a Title to part of our Abundance, and tho' here, as was before said, we may and ought to make Use of our Christian Prudence and Discretion, yet it will be a good and safe Rule to avoid being over Prudent and over Discreet in

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Doing these Necessary Works of Mercy. 'Tis dangerous to Use Ourselves to be too Nice and Scrupulous in these Cases, for he that will not part with any thing to the Relief of the Distress'd, 'till he is satisfy'd of his Desert, as well as his Poverty, will never want Reasons to be Excus'd, by Distinguishing too narrowly, who is more and who less, and who not at all fitting to be Reliev'd; he may in time by degrees distinguish quite away all his Charity. And the most Coverous and Tenacious Wretch in the World will always have ready a softer Name for his Sin, and call his Want of Mercy, Abundance of Discretion. But We can have no greater Example, no nobler Pattern in doing Good, than the Eternal Fountain of All Goodness, even God Himself, *Whose Mercy is Over All his Works.* And as far as it is possible, Our Love should be like His, Unbounded and Universal, *Matt. 5. 45. That We may be the Children of our Father which is in Heaven, for He maketh His Sun to rise on the Evil and the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and the Unjust.* Be we therefore, in this Particular Perfect, as Our Saviour subjoins, *as Our Father in Heaven is Perfect.*

ably, Casting Our Bread upon the Waters implies a generous Distribution of our Goods without any Prospect of Advantage or Requital

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quital. So selfish a Principle as that Prospect can never lodge in the same Breast with True Charity, it being One of the Distinguishing marks of that Grace, *Charity seeketh not its Own*. Whenever we give with so mean a design, and so ignoble hopes as to Receive, we are no longer acting the Christian but the Merchant, nor exercising Religion but driving a Trade; and That of all Trades the most sordid and base, it not being to be carry'd on without Dissimulation and Deceit. For he that deals in this paltry Traffick, while he pretends nothing but free Love and generous Friendship, yet at the same time whatever he bestows, his Gifts have still a Hook under them, nor are they Presents to enrich his Friend, but Baits to take him. This poor and contemptible Artifice of making gain of them to whom we pretend to do good, is wholly inconsistent with that largeness and openness of Spirit, that freedom from Hypocrisy and Design, that becomes a Professor of Christianity. Therefore that we may be sure that we have no such by-Ends, no such little Designs lurking unperceiv'd within Us, *Let Our Bread be Cast upon the Waters*, Our Gifts scatter'd among the Poor, and such from whom it would be as absurd to hope for any Advantage or Return, as it would be to expect a Harvest from Seed cast into

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the Sea. This is that excellent Charity which Our Saviour practis'd, and which he taught and commanded us, and which alone will be accepted and valuable in his sight. *For if you, says he, do Good to them that do Good to you, what thank have you? for Sinners also do even the same. And if you lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for Sinners also lend to Sinners to receive as much again. But do good and lend, hoping for Nothing again, and your Reward shall be Great, and Ye shall be the Children of the Highest, for He is kind even to the Unthankfull and the Evil.*

Having thus with what brevity I could, according to the Sense of the several Interpreters, shewn in what manner this Duty is to be Exercis'd, I shall proceed and endeavour to shew the Reasonableness and the Excellence of it.

1st, The Reasonableness of it is apparent by its being so implanted by God in Our Nature, so woven into the frame of our very Being, that he must have quite put off all Humanity, who is not conscious to himself of an inbred forcible Inclination to it. The Natural Passion of Pity was for this reason born with Us, and made a part of Our Constitution, that we might by That be continually excited and stirr'd up to help and succour all that are in Necessity and Distress.

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Distress. Our Bowels naturally yearn at all miserable Objects, we cannot help, unless We have defac'd the first and most genuin impressions of God upon our Souls, we cannot help, I say, *Feeling Within* somewhat answerable and *Akin* to all the Misery that we see *Without*, and we do but Relieve Ourselves when we remove the Afflictions of a Brother. And this is evident from that Pleasure which unavoidably results from these Offices of Love. Pleasure being always inseparable from Actions purely Natural. Now a good Man, after every seasonable refreshment of the Wretched and Necessitous, finds an Unexpressible Delight, an Ease of Mind, a Complacency of Spirit, and a secret irresistible Joy springing up in his Breast. All the good which *He* design'd to shed abroad and part with to his poor Brother recoils back upon himself, he feels more Comfort Within then he sent Out, reaps infinitely greater Satisfaction in Doing Mercy, than the Other by having it Done to him, and finds experimentally confirm'd, that great Truth which *St. Paul* quotes from our Saviour's own Mouth, *It is more Blessed to Give than to Receive*. So he determin'd, who was undoubtedly the best Judge that ever was in this Case, having had continual Experience of both Conditions, who, tho' He himself subsisted upon
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the Alms of those that Minister'd to him out of their Substance, yet even out of those Alms found wherewithall to supply daily the Necessities of Others.

There is a Natural Obligation to this Duty, from the near Relation that every Man hath to the very meanest and most abject, the poorest and most miserable of his own Kind. We are all the Workmanship of the same hands, made of the same matter, moulded in the same form, and copy'd from the same Image, even that of God himself. *Did not He that made Me in the Womb make Him? and did not One fashion us?* says holy Job. From the Consideration of which the Wise Man tells us more than once, that he that *Regards not the Poor, Reproaches his Maker.* And this is so Unnatural, that to deny Bread to the Hungry, Lodging to the Out-cast, and Covering to the Naked, is in that Elegant and Significant Expression of *Isaiah, 58. 9. For a Man to hide Himself from His own Flesh.* But as strictly as we are oblig'd by the Tyes of Nature, the Communion of Saints lays yet a higher and more forcible Obligation upon us. For there is no Temporal Relation can be compar'd to that which is Spiritual and Eternal. As then there is a general Reason for our Mercy and Kindness to All Men, so there is a particular One for our *doing Good*

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Good to them that are of the Household of Faith. Is it not fit that they should partake of the bowels of Man's Compassion, who communicate with us in the Everlasting Mercies of God? who are endu'd with the gracious Influences of the same Spirit, and have the Image of the same God, not only by Nature stamp'd upon 'em, but by Grace renew'd within them? How can we make Others, nay how can we make Ourselves believe, that we are in Earnest when we daily in our Creed profess that we have an intimate Union with all the living Members of Christ upon Earth, if we have no Fellow-feeling of their Sufferings, nor in the least contribute to the Relief of their Distress?

We may consider too, that We are but Pilgrims upon the Earth, and all Travellers upon the same Road. The Greatest of us, tho' he may Travel with Costlier Equipage, and more Splendid Retinue, yet is at best but a Passenger, taking a Journey to the same Country where the meanest that set out with him may be as great as He. Now how foolish and ridiculous, as well as barbarous and inhuman, must it be for One in this Condition to deny so poor a Sum, as would defray the Necessary Expences of a Fellow-Traveller, who at his Journey's End, and in his Own Country, which from
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any of us is not very far off, has as great, perhaps a greater Estate, as good, perhaps better Friends than himself? From all these Relations which we bear to each Other, whether as Men or Christians, it plainly appears that this great Act of Religion, the Relieving the Poor, is a most Reasonable Service.

But now were this Duty as seemingly Contrary to our Reason, as it is manifestly agreeable to it, yet God's positive Command would both Justify the Equity and Wisdom of it, and exact our ready and entire Obedience to it. *Therefore Help the Poor,* says the Son of *Sirach*, Eccclus 29. 9. *for the Commandments sake.* Now thro' the whole Word of God there is no Commandment more peremptorily enjoyn'd, or more frequently repeated than This, it fills every Page of *Moses* and the Prophets in the Old, and thro' the whole New Testament Our Blessed Lord and his Apostles inculcate nothing so often, urge nothing so pressingly, recommend nothing so affectionately as this great Evangelical Duty. It were needless they are so obvious, and endless they are so numerous, to recite only the Places where we meet with this Command. I shall only observe therefore, that as our Love to God is chiefly express'd and only made visible by our Obeying Every one of his most Holy
Laws,

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Laws, according to that of our Saviour, *If ye love Me keep my Commandments*, so in a particular manner and eminent degree God has made the Obedience to this Command a Sign of our Affection, and a Test of our Love to him. And the highest Pretences without This are in his Sight no better than a Lye and abominable Hypocrisy: *Whoso hath this World's good, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Compassion from Him, how dwelleth the Love of God in Him?*

How was it possible for our Saviour to make us more sensible of this than by telling us, that denying suitable Reliefs to the Hungry and Thirsty, the Naked and the Stranger, the Prisoner and the Sick, are all so many Acts of Cruelty and Unmercifullness to Him? *In as much as Ye did it not to one of the least of these, Ye did it not unto Me.* As on the other hand he accounts every Act of Mercy and Bounty to the Poor, as bestowed upon Himself. *Verily I say unto you, In as much as Ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, Ye have done it unto me.* What a Saying is this? *Can a Man be Profitable to God?* as Job asks the Question: and as Elihu: *If thou be Righteous, what givest thou Him? or what do's He Receive at thy Hands?* Alas! *my Goodness extendeth not to Thee,* is the Confession of the Man after God's own Heart. Yet see here the infinite Conde-

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Condescension of our Saviour, he has found out a way how We may Give Somewhat even to Him who is already Lord of all; be Mercifull to the Fountain of all Mercy, and do Good even to Goodness it self, in that he places to his Own Account and graciously accepts as Done to Himself whatever we do to his afflicted Members for his sake. And for this very Reason has order'd that *since we should not have Him always with us, as he speaks, yet We should have the Poor always, that whenever We will we may do them Good.* Mark 14. 7. He has left them here his Representatives, that we might never want whereupon to Exercise our Love to Him, even to the End of the World. And therefore this Saying of our Saviour's, and that of Moses in the 15th of Deuteronomy, to which it refers, *The Poor shall never Cease out of the Land,* are not to be look'd upon by us barely as True Predictions, but as Gracious Promises. For their Poverty shall make our Riches truly Blessings, by affording us Opportunity of Employing them to their noblest and best use, the comforting our Brethren, and the continual setting forth the Honour and Love which we always Owe, and ought always to be paying to our Lord.

It is from no defect or failing of the inexhaustible stores of God's Goodness, that there

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there is such a thing or name as Poverty among the Sons of Men. Had it been as agreeable to his Infinite Wisdom, as it was easy to his Almighty Power, He might have made the same Abundance and Plenty common to all Mankind, and left no room for the foolish Cavils against Providence, which are made by the Atheistical Murmurers at the present unequal Distribution of the good things of this World. Or, since it did please God to make this World consist as it does of Rich and Poor, He who thro' the whole Scripture declares such a Regard, and professes so great a Care for the Poor, might supply all their Necessities with his Own hand. He that fed the Israelites in a barren Wilderness with Angels food, and bread dropt from Heaven, and preserv'd their Garments from wearing out or waxing old; He that fed his Prophet by Ravens, and bless'd the Poor Widows handfull of Meal and her Cruise of Oyl, so that neither wasted or fail'd, could still if he saw it good, without calling in the help of the Rich, relieve all the wants of his Creatures Himself. And This perhaps some would be apt to think more suitable to his Wisdom, and more conducing to his Glory, because this would be daily to Exert and make visible an Almighty Power, and besides makethem whom he thus sustain'd have a more near regard
to

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to the hand that fed 'em, and have an absolute and immediate Dependence upon God alone. *But his Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways.* He as much surpasses us in Wisdom as in Power, and for wise and just Reasons has rather chose to send Man to Man for a Relief, both as a Tryal, as has been said, of our Faith and Affection to Him, and also on purpose to endear us to Each other, and diffuse continually thro' the whole Creation that Divine Principle which mov'd Him first to Create, Love. By which he exalts our Nature to the highest Pitch of Dignity and Happiness that it is capable of, for questionless 'tis both the greatest Honour, and the perfectest Felicity, to be like God; and it is Certain that Nothing makes Man so like God as Charity. Nay, it makes a Man be instead of God (what can be said or imagin'd higher) to his wanting Brother. And as the Poor are the Representatives of Christ in his Weak and Suffering Humanity; so the Charitable Rich, who feed and sustain them, Represent Him in his Powerfull and All-sufficient Divinity. And does not this way of God's providing for his poor Creatures, by thus powerfully inclining Men's Affections to execute the Good that he Wills, (for all our Charity to Others proceeds meerly from God's Grace to us) redound

as

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as much to his Honour, as if he fed them himself immediately from Heaven? Nay does it not more? Since to turn the Heart of Man is a more illustrious Proof of a Divine Power, than to strike a River out of a Rock, or to spread a Table in the Wilderness. And since hereby he does good, not only to Those he relieves, but much more to the Relievers themselves, those that he honours so far as to be the Instruments and Conveyers of his Goodness, This brings in, both from the Givers and Receivers, a never-failing Tribute of Adoration and Praise to the Almighty; and as the Apostle speaks, *The Administration of this Service, not only supplies the Want of the Saints, but is abundant also by Many Thanksgivings unto God; Whilst by the Experiment of this Ministration, they glorify God for your profess'd Subjection to the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal Distribution unto them, and unto all Men.* 2 Cor. 9. 12, 13. When *Your Light* thus shines before Men, when your Beams do not only Enlighten, but your Influence and Heat Cherish and Warm 'em too; when they do not only See, but Feel your Good Works, how can they choose but *Glorify your Father which is in Heaven?*

There is yet behind One great Instance of the Excellence of Charity, and that is, its singular Virtue in the purging us from Sin,

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which

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which our Saviour intimates in that Saying of his, *Give Alms and all things are clean unto You.* By Mercy, says Solomon, *Iniquity is purg'd*, Prov. 16. 6. and the Son of Sirach, *Water will quench a flaming Fire, and Alms make an Atonement for Sins*, Ecclus 3. 30. To which we may add that of St. Peter, tho' I know it is interpreted sometimes in another Sense, *Charity covers a multitude of Sins.* Without doubt We may, with a well-grounded Confidence, hope, that this our daily Prayer will be graciously heard, *Forgive Us our Debts*, when by having shewn Mercy to the Poor, we have made God, or rather God has made himself, our Debtor.

Indeed there are so Great and Glorious things to be said, and truly said, of Bounty to the Poor, that the only danger is, lest we should carry our Opinion of it beyond its Bounds; and by setting too great a Value upon our Good Works in our own Eyes, make 'em not only of no Value at all, but even Sinfull and Abominable in the Eyes of God. And this we should do, if we should think that by their Efficacy, they could cleanse us from Guilt, or that upon the Score of their inherent Worth, God were oblig'd to forgive us our Sins, or that in strict Justice, and of Condignity, they merited an Everlasting Reward. This were impiously to Equal Our selves with God, to
come

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come to terms, and drive a bargain with our Maker; and, which is the highest of all Impieties, sacrilegiously to rob Christ of the Merits of his Sufferings, whose Blood only can wash away Sin. To do good and to distribute, are indeed Sacrifices of a sweet smelling Savour unto God, and Offerings in which he declares himself well-pleas'd; yet by their own Efficacy can no more atone for Sin, than the Old Legal Sacrifices could, which had all their Virtue from that One perfect Oblation, which they were all but Figures and Shadows of, even That which was once for all offer'd up by our Saviour on the Cross. In short, Good Works instrumentally conduce to, and are indispensable Conditions, but not meritorious Causes of Salvation. Without God's favourable Acceptance of 'em thro' Christ's Merits, we must own that Our best Deeds are but as Dross, and We ourselves but unprofitable Servants.

And here, let no Patron of the Romish Merit object, that this Doctrine is any Discouragement to the Works of Charity, or that it cuts off all Plea to a Recompence for our Christian Obedience at the hands of God. What? because we dare not arrogantly and falsely plead Desert, have we no other Plea? Yes, and a much surer too: God be ever blessed for it, there are other Attributes of his, that oblige Him in his

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Transactions with Men, as much as his Justice can. Such are his *Mercy and Truth*, which *are* here *met together*. He looking upon us thro' Christ, has expressly promis'd a plentiful and glorious Reward, to very mean and unproportion'd Performances: which Promise, tho' meer Grace induc'd him to make, yet, when made, his Essential Veracity and Justice stand oblig'd to see perform'd. And from the Confidence of this, we have in all reason, as strong and enforcing Motives to raise our Minds to the highest and most heroick Acts of Christian Charity, as if every such single Act could, by its own intrinsic Worth, merit an Eternal Weight of Glory: Since in the Natural course of things it is plain, that the chief Excitement to undertake any Performance, is not so much a Perswasion of the Merit of our Work, as the Assurance of the Certainty of our Reward:

Which naturally leads to the *second* thing propos'd to be consider'd in the Text; and that is, the promis'd Reward.

And here, we may take notice in general, that it is too fine a Notion, which some Men, with more Zeal than Knowledge, to speak the most Charitably of them, have advanc'd; namely, That God and Goodness are so excellent in their own Nature, that the

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the One is to be Worship'd and Obey'd, and the Other Study'd and Practis'd, merely and solely for their own Sakes: That we ought not to have an Eye to Reward; This being a low Principle, unworthy of a Christian, making our best Performances selfish and mercenary, and thereby Destructive of all that is good in our Love and Obedience. This I affirm to be as falsely, as it is speciously and ambitiously said; and I don't know, which is the greater Pride, thus to slight a Reward from God freely offer'd, or to challenge one of Him as justly deserv'd. He who knows whereof we are made, and what is the chief Spring of Action in us, never bids us Work, but he bids us Hope, and to disregard his glorious Promises, is as great an Affront to the Divine Majesty, as to disobey his Righteous Commands; as on the Other hand, to believe and embrace what he has promis'd, is as high an Act of Religion, as to do what he has Enjoyn'd. Indeed Faith and Good Works ought never to be Separated; yet by St. Paul's Supposition, it is possible to have Faith without Charity, but it is impossible to have Charity without Faith. For it is Belief in Christ that turns Natural Works into Christian Ones; The Reliance upon God's Word, and doing good for his sake, is that which ennobles and spiritualizes Munificence, and makes

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it become Charity. So that the Duty we are treating of, could not be itself without Respect to the Promise, it might be an Exercise of good Nature, but none of Faith, it might be a Moral Virtue, not an Evangelical Grace; it might be a *Giving to the Poor*, but not a *Lending to the Lord*.

I come now, lastly, to consider the particular Promise made to this Duty in the Text, *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, and after many days thou shalt find it*. Which all Expositors agree to be understood, both of a Temporal and Eternal Reward, and that, in these Words, Charity has the Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is to come.

1st, Of the Life that now is, which obviates that great Difficulty which the Devil is wont to throw in our Way, and the Covetous Worldling so readily lays hold of for Excuse, namely, the fear of Exhausting our Estates by too liberal Contributions, and reducing Ourselves to the same Necessities that we relieve. But this is a most Unchristian, as well as a most Unreasonable Fear; a most Ungodly, as well as a most Unmanly Distrust. 1st, A most Ungodly One, because there is nothing thro' the whole Book of God so frequently and expressly promis'd, as that these Worldly Goods are
so

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so far from being in danger to be lost or thrown away, that they are no better way secur'd to Us, than by being dispens'd to the Indigent and Needy : and that this Duty is attended with all the Blessings of this Life.

I shall mention but a few Texts out of many that assure us of this infallible Truth: And *first*, as soon as *Moses* had given that remarkable Command in *Deuteronomy* 15. of Giving Willingly and Plentifully to the Poor, he thus enforces it: *Because for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. He that giveth unto the Poor, says the Wisest of Men, shall not lack: and again, The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be water'd also himself, Prov. 11. 25.* Nor is this a transient, but a durable Blessing; nor enriches only the Present, but provides for Posterity. *David* tells us from his own Experience, *I have been Young and now am Old, yet have I not seen the Righteous, that is the Charitable, forsaken, nor his Seed begging their Bread, Psal. 37. 25.* And his Son *Solomon* assures us, *A good Man leaves an Inheritance to his Children's Children, and the Wealth of the Sinner is laid up for the Just; but He that by unjust Gain increaseth his Substance, he shall gather it for Him that will pity the Poor.* 'Tis the Son of *Sirach's* Advice therefore, *Ecclus 29. 11. Lay up thy Treasure ac-*

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according to the Commandments of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more Profit than Gold. Riches that are kept, profit not in the day of Wrath, but shut up Alms in thy Storehouses, and it shall deliver Thee from all Affliction, it shall fight for Thee against thine Enemies, better than a mighty Shield or strong Spear. Can any One, that reads these, and many other the like Texts, and pretends that he believes the Scripture to be the Word of God, have the least Apprehension that his Charity should ever make even his Worldly Condition worse, or waste or diminish his Substance? Nay, can any One, that is a true Believer of God's Word, doubt, but that by Exercising this Godlike Virtue he shall increase, or at least bless and sanctify, what he has?

But further, *2dly*, It is an Unreasonable Mistrust, to fear, that our Alms or Good Deeds to the Poor, tho' never so liberal, if within the compass of Prudence and Discretion, which few have need in this Case to be advis'd not to transgress, should ever bring any Man into Want or Distress. Let every One consult his own Experience, and consider if this be not true in what he has observ'd in the World. Who ever knew an Estate impair'd by Charity? by Love of our Brethren? But by Love of Ourselves, how many? By Luxury, by Prodigality, by Love of the World, by the very Desire of encreas-
ing

S E R M O N I. 25

ing and multiplying, how many? These are the ways that Providence has taken care should destroy Riches, that the Sin may appear in the Punishment, and the Cause in the Effect. These are the *Wings that Riches* most usually *take to themselves*, when *they fly away*, and then as the Wise Man speaks, *what Profit has he that labour'd for the Wind?* Eccles. 5. 16. The best and securest way to fix these Uncertain and Fleeting things, even in a Worldly Sense, is to lay 'em up where it is impossible they should be lost. Whatever is bestow'd in Charity is still our Own, the Satisfaction of having done Good, lives within us, and can never be stolen or spent. *Quas dederis, solas semper habebis, Opes*, was the Saying even of an Heathen. The Riches that we give, are those Only that we shall always have. What Care, what Caution do the wealthy Worldlings take about Securities? and yet how often is all their Care and nicest Circumspection defeated, and all their Riches, so cautiously Secur'd, dwindled into a notch'd Stick, or an useless piece of Parchment and Wax? But what is bestow'd on the Poor and Needy, is ever Ours; subject to no Casualties of Water or Fire, and out of the Reach of a breaking Banker or fraudulent Conveyancer; so Ours, as even still to bless and encrease the Heap out of which it was taken.

But

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But there is yet a more valuable and certain Reward for this Duty; namely, that which every Faithfull Christian knows to be reserv'd for it in the World to come. *Let us not therefore, as St. Paul exhorts, be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

For lastly, tho' *many days* have past, and we yet meet with no Return here, let us not faint or be discourag'd. There shall at last come a Day, when our long Expectation shall be abundantly satisfy'd, and the Delay of our Reward more than compensated, by the Greatness and Excellency and Eternity of it. That Day shall come, when the Grand Inquisition which our Judge will make, shall be, not How frequent, or How long our Prayers have been, or what Powerfull Preachers with what eagerness we have follow'd; not how often we have said unto him, Lord, Lord; not what Edifying Discourses we have listen'd to, or even made; not so much what good things we have said or heard, as what we have done? What Acts of Mercy and Charity we have exercis'd to our distress'd Brethren upon Earth, What Hungry we have fed, what Naked we have cloath'd, what Sick, what Prisoners we have visited? It shall then be made manifest in the Sight of Angels and Men, how
high

S E R M O N I. 27

high a Value our gracious Master puts up-
on the least of these Services perform'd in
Sincerity and Love. When a few perishing
earthly Things shall intitle us to Immortal
Riches and Everlasting Glory, nay even a
Cup of cold Water to a Kingdom. When
We shall hear that joyfull Sentence, *Come,
Ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom pre-
par'd for You from the Beginning of the World;
For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat;
thirsty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye
cloathed me.* We shall then, to our unspeak-
able Comfort find, how prudent a Forecast
it was, to remove in time our Effects hence,
where we have no abiding, and to transferr
'em into the Country where we were to
live for Ever; to lay up before-hand Treas-
ures in Heaven, and, by the righteous Use
of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, secure
to Ourselves an Everlasting Habitation.

*To which God of his Infinite Mercy bring
us all, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom
with the Father and the Holy Ghost be ascrib'd,
as is most due, all Might, Majesty, and Do-
minion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

S E R M O N II.

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SERMON II.

HEBR. II. 16, and part of the
17 Verse.

*For verily He took not on Him the
Nature of Angels, but He took
on Him the Seed of Abraham.
Wherefore in all things it be-
hov'd him to be made like unto
his Brethren.*

THE Incarnation of Our Blessed
Saviour is set forth in the words
that I have just now read unto
you, so *clearly*, as to the Evidence of
it, and so *advantageously*, both as to the
Goodness of Willing it, and the Wisdom of
Contriving it, that I could not pitch on
any

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any more fit for the Subject of your Meditations at this Season, set apart by the Piety of the Church for the Solemn and Devout Commemoration of this great *Mystery of Godliness, God manifested in the Flesh*. For in these words,

I. The Incarnation of the Son of God is set forth *Most Clearly*, as to the Evidence of it; we in them being plainly taught, and beyond all Exception convinc'd, of the Truth of the Catholick Faith in this important Article; the first Member of the Text being an invincible proof of the Divinity, as the second is of the Humanity, of Our Blessed Lord.

1st, We have here an undeniable Argument of the Eternal Divinity of Christ, before his appearing in the Flesh. For He, in whose free choice it was, to take upon him either of the two Natures, that of Angels, or that of Men, must, of Necessity, have been a person Existing before he made that choice, and also of a different Nature from either of those two Natures, One of which he was pleas'd in time to assume into his Own; and therefore not a meer Man, of no Elder Being than from his Birth of the Blessed Virgin, as most impiously the Socinians, nor even One of the Highest Rank of Angels, before this Visible World's Creation,
yet

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yet a Creature, as the Arians, tho' with more seeming Honour to our Saviour's Person, yet with equal Repugnancy to his Word and Doctrine, affirm.

2dly, We have here likewise as clear a Proof of Christ's Real Humanity. This being also a Material Part of our Faith, and as Necessary to be believ'd as his Essential Divinity. And what can more plainly be taught? how can a Doctrine in more express Words be laid down than this is here, where we are told, that *he took upon Him the Seed of Abraham, and was in all things made like unto his Brethren?*

II. Again, secondly, The same Wonderfull Mystery is here set forth *most Advantageously*, and that,

1st, As to the exceeding Grace and Goodness of it to Mankind; in that, after the Fall both of Angels and Men, He left the One Unpity'd, Unregarded in the Wretched State; which by their Apostacy and Rebellion they had justly brought themselves into, *reserv'd in Everlasting Chains under darkness unto the Judgment of the great day*, Jude 6. and yet out of infinite Compassion to the other, laid hold of them as soon as ever they fell, and immediately after the Act of their Rebellion, for which they as justly ought to have had their Portion for ever with
the

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the Devil and his Angels, gave a Promise of that, which in the fulness of time he perform'd, when by making himself One of Them, he advanc'd them to a more glorious State than that from which they fell, made them Heirs of Everlasting Light and Endless Felicity.

2dly, As to the Wonderfull Wisdom in contriving this means of Salvation; in order to which *it behov'd Him to be made like to his Brethren.* This Method, which God has been pleas'd to make use of to bring about the Redemption of Mankind, was of all Others the most Wise and the most Fitting for so Divine a Purpose. God sent his Son to be made Man, that he might be a Ransom for Man, a Price indeed infinitely above the value of the Purchase; and a means immeasurably beyond the End, yet not unfitly, nor ungloriously: not ungloriously, because the Salvation of Man, and the whole Oeconomy and Ordering of it, tends lastly to the Glory of God; nor unfitly, because of the singular Use and infinite Benefits of this Method, above all Others, to the Sons of Men; for both which Reasons, *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren.*

These

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These four Particulars then, we see, are manifestly contain'd in, or naturally deduc'd from, the words of the Text.

I. The Divinity of our Saviour pre-existent to his Humanity.

II. His Assuming, in time, the Human Nature, into that Divine Nature which he had with the Father from all Eternity.

III. The Infinite Grace and Love to Mankind, express'd in preferring Them; in Assuming Their Nature rather than that of the lapsed Angels, who equally stood in need of a Redeemer.

IV. The Admirable Wisdom and fitness of this Method of Our Redemption, by Christ's becoming the Son of Man, to advance us to the high Privilege of being the Sons of God.

Of which in their order, and as briefly as may be; that I may in the last place proceed to make some Practical Inferences from the whole.

I. And First of the first ; namely, The Divinity of Our Saviour, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, and His Everlasting Existence, before His appearing in the Flesh,
C plainly

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plainly here taught us, In That *He took not on Him the Nature of Angels, but took on him the Seed of Abraham.* For tho' the Original says only, as in the Margin of Our Bible it is Own'd, *He taketh not hold of Angels,* yet how could it be worth the Remark of a Divinely inspir'd Apostle, that Christ should not, in any Sense, that in Scripture usage the word ἐπ' αὐτῶν is capable of, lay hold of Angels, Creatures of so Different and Superior a Nature to his Own, if He was meerly Man, either to save them from falling (as the word is us'd in St. Matthew's Gospel to express our Saviour's catching Peter as he was sinking) or to help them up, and restore them when they were fallen? Is it to be thought, if, according to *Arius*, He was one of the Supreme Order of Angels, that He *would* not lay hold of Them if he *could*? Or if, according to *Socius*, he was a Man only, can it be conceiv'd, How He could, if He would? But let the Translation, which Our Church has, upon very good grounds, so long Authoriz'd, so just, so consonant to the whole tenor of the Apostle's design, and so agreeable to the Analogy of Faith, be allow'd (as no reason appears why it should not) and from thence we may rightly infer, as was before hinted, That He must have been neither Angel nor Man, while it was in deliberation whether of those

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two Natures he would take upon him ; and therefore must have needs been God, there being no third Nature , besides the Divine, that can possibly be ascrib'd to Him. He must also actually have had a Being, before he could make that choice; rejecting the One Nature, and assuming the Other, out of his Own good pleasure. Accordingly He, who, the Apostle here says , took upon him the Seed of *Abraham*, tells us of Himself, *Before Abraham was, I am. I AM!* declaring hereby, not only his Existence, but His Essence, His Divine Nature; not only *That* He was, but *What* He was; that is, no other than the Lord Jehovah, He, whose incommunicable Name is, *I AM*, as Himself spake to *Moses*, *Exod. 3. 14. Thou shalt say unto them, I AM hath sent me.* But is it needful in a Christian Auditory, to undertake the Defence of the Divinity of Christ? Is it needfull to go about, to industriously prove to you, that in the whole Solemnity and Worship of This day, we have not all been committing the most gross Idolatry? For, if Christ be not God, our whole Religion is no better! Is it needful to cite to you all those plain Texts of Scripture, so many and so obvious, in which this Fundamental Truth is contain'd? *That the Word was God, and that That Word was made Flesh*, that Christ himself tells us, *That He and the Father are One*, that *He came*

C 2

forth

forth from the Father, and, what if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before ? and that solemn Address of Christ to the Father, just before his Passion, and Now, O Father, Glorify me with thine Ownself, with the Glory which I had with Thee before the World was. And again, No man has ascended into Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven ; which being spoken by our Lord, while he was yet on Earth, implies, that he so came down from Heaven as still to be in Heaven, that is, in respect of his Divinity, by which He is Everywhere present. But not to multiply Texts in a matter so clear as this is to every one, that without Prejudice or Prepossession has ever read the Gospel ; If Christ were a meer Man only, as the Heresy, that grows and thrives so much daily among us (if without Allowance or Encouragement, yet without Check or Controll) pretends, to what purpose does our Saviour and his Apostles lay so great stress upon God's sending Him into the World to redeem it ? Why do they so frequently and so Emphatically magnify and extoll this Action, as the Highest and chiefest Mark of God's Love to Mankind ? God So loved the World, that He gave his only begotten Son ! says He himself ; and St. John, In This was manifested the Love of God, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World,
that

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that We might live through Him. If we look upon all this as no more, but that God should cause a Man to be born after another Manner than the rest of Men, and then deliver Him up, who by his Own Nature was Mortal, to dye for the Expiation of the Sins of the whole World; if the Death of a Man could in this Case avail any thing, what such mighty and wonderful Expression of his Love to Us can we discover, in this way of Redemption, more than would have appear'd if he had redeem'd us any Other way? It had been indeed a greater and more wonderful Love to Christ, if He had been Man only, for God to employ him in this Glorious work; and for his reward to advance him, if such a thing were possible, to the Partnership of his Own Divinity. For it is more to make One Man a God, than to make all Mankind Kings and Saints, and capable of Enjoying God, and reigning with him to all Eternity. But it is not God's Love to Christ in this Wonderful Dispensation, for He gave Him for Us, He spared not Him, that He might spare Us, but God's Love to the World, to the whole Race of lost Mankind, that the Scripture every-where so justly magnifies and extolls. Nor is it so much the Redemption it self, as the surprising Method and Means of it; and the infinite dignity of the Redeemer, that both

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Christ and St. *John* aim at in the forecited places, as the highest Recommendation, and most astonishing Instance of the Divine Love. And surely, the sending His *Only Begotten Son*, *The Giving Him for the Sins of the World*, the *Not sparing his Own Son*, carry a much higher and diviner sense, in the language of Our Saviour and his Apostles, than to deserve to be so blasphemously trifled with, as they and the most clear and express Texts relating to the Divine Nature of Christ have been, and continue to be, by being spuriously Criticiz'd upon, and Pedantically debas'd, out of all their Noble Significancy, into a Meaning, Low, Contemptible and Absurd! We might possibly, without danger to the Truth, venture the whole matter of Debate, between Us and the *Denyers of the Lord that bought 'em*, upon this Issue. We will out of the Gospel produce our Texts for the Divinity of Our Saviour, and then be content to refer it to any Disinterested Heathen or Jew; or, if they please, to any of their Own dear Friends among the Mahometan Unitarians, whether the Truths that we so earnestly contend for, as the *Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*, be not clearly laid down, and manifestly contain'd in them? And consequently, if they believ'd those Passages to be immediately inspir'd from God, as these Men, that we have to deal with, pretend to do,

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do; and, as their great Master, with great strength of Reason, Once by Him rightly employ'd, has prov'd that they are; whether they would not gladly embrace 'em, and readily subscribe to 'em? And if so, are not Jews or Turks, or profest Infidels, in this Case, more excusable than these Perversers of those Revelations, which they themselves acknowledge to be Divine? Certainly it would be much more Ingenuous, roundly and frankly to reject at once the whole Gospel, than thus to Use it. And this proceeding would better become that Candor and Freedom of Spirit, and Philosophical Plainness and Natural Probity, that is so much pretended and boasted of by some Men. But to vex and wrest Scripture at the rate they do, to expound it to any Sense, by the most forc'd, improper, and unusual Interpretations, as the Socinians freely Own they do, and will do, rather than acknowledge any Doctrine in it which seems to contradict their Reason, particularly this of the Incarnation of the Son of God, is to assume such a Power over Divine Writ, as over any Human Writing would never be allow'd or endur'd; nay worse, is to make the Oracles of the True God, design'd to enlighten and instruct Mankind, as ambiguous and obscure as those deliver'd by the false Gods of the Heathen, on purpose to deceive, that is, ac-

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according to a very Great Man of Our Own Church, but one who was never accus'd of harshness of Expression, or too great an Inveteracy or Prejudice against Them, to *treat the Word of God like the Word of the Devil.* And now I leave it to every ones impartial Judgment, whether They, who by denying Christ's Divinity, pretend to a more pure and rational Christianity, can, without, or indeed, with putting Charity to the utmost stretch, be allow'd so much as the Name of Christians.

II. Secondly, We are to consider the Reality of Christ's Human Nature, which was as Necessary as the Other, to his being a Mediator between God and Man. Therefore the Apostle teaches us, *There is One God, and One Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus.* The Second Adam was as truly a Man as the First, *That since by Man came Death, by Man also should come the Resurrection from the Dead.* But I shall wave insisting on the Proof of the Manhood of Christ; for tho' He, that is both God and Man, was as early deny'd to be Man as God, yet the Now most prevailing Heresy, and from which at present the True Faith is in most danger, is so far from taking from Him the True Nature of Man, that it will allow Him to have *Truly* no Other. I shall there-

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therefore conclude both these Heads with this One Observation ; That, tho' we had none of those many plain and positive doctrinal Assertions in Holy Scripture, of the Two distinct Natures of our Blessed Lord, yet the bare History of his Actions upon Earth, a simple Narrative only of his Life, his Miracles, his Death and Resurrection, would be sufficient to prove Him, what we, with the whole Catholick Church, believe Him to be, both God and Man. And this is the Proof, which our Church makes use of, in that plain, but excellent Homily on the Incarnation, as fitted for the Capacity of the Weakest, as the Conviction of the Wisest. In that He did Hunger and Thirst, Eat and Drink, Sleep and Wake, in that He Wept and Sorrowed over *Jerusalem*, in that He Suffer'd the most grievous Pains, both of Body and Soul, and finally Death it self: what can be more apparent, than that he was perfect Man, as We are ? But in that He forgave Sins, cast out Devils, knew the Thoughts of Men's Hearts, walk'd upon the Waves, and had the Winds and the Seas at his Command ; lastly, and chiefly, in that He rais'd Himself from Death to Life, and ascended up into Heaven : what can be more evident, than that He was perfect God also, and equal to the Father as touching his Deity ? *It is therefore necessary*

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to Everlasting Salvation, that we thus believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ: And the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

III. I come now to the Third Particular; The infinite Grace and Love to Mankind, express'd in preferring Them and assuming their Nature, rather than that of the fallen Angels, who stood equally in need of a Redeemer.

Without all Controversy, says the Apostle elsewhere, Great is the Mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the Flesh. Absolutely, and by itself consider'd, wondrous Great; but behold the same Mystery here, by the Comparison of Angels and Men, made much Greater, and infinitely more Gracious: That God, who is himself a Spirit, should rather assume Flesh than Spirit; That He should choose wretched Man, vile Dust and Ashes, and pass by those Once Glorious Heavenly and Immortal Spirits; That God the Father, who spar'd not the Angels that sinned, as St. Peter tells us, should yet be so desirous to spare Men, that for their sakes He spar'd not his Own Son, as St. Paul assures us; That the Glorious Cherubim and Seraphim, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers, so far before and above us in every

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ry Thing else, should in this Dignity conferr'd on our Nature, by being taken into the Godhead, come so far behind and beneath us, is beyond the Rules and Reach of our weak Reason, is matter of Wonder and Astonishment. It casts me into an Ecstasy, says *St. Chrysostom*, and makes me imagine of our Nature some great Matter, I cannot well express What. *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindfull of him, or the Son of Man, that thou regardest him?* says holy *David*, transported with the Wonder of God's Goodness to Man, in that He made him *a little lower than the Angels*. But the Wonder is now infinitely encreas'd; for, by taking our Nature, Christ has made him a great deal higher than the Angels: For those bright and immortal Spirits, since his Incarnation, have, and do continually adore Our Nature in the Personal, Indivisible, but Unconfus'd Union with the Deity. As the Apostle to the Hebrews, *When he bringeth in the first begotten into the World, he saith, Let all the Angels of God worship Him*, Heb. 1. 6.

And can we pass by this wonderful Grace and Dignity, conferr'd on our Nature, without asking the Question which *St. John Baptist's* Mother did, on a like occasion, *Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* Luke 1. 43. Whence is this to Us, that the Lord himself should come to us?

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us? should be One of us? If the Angels themselves were not counted worthy of this Favour, whence is this to us?

We may find among the Fathers, who have ventur'd to search after an Account of so wonderful a Dispensation, several Reasons or Inducements, why God rather had Compassion on Us, than those Heavenly Spirits that fell: I shall mention, and but just mention, Two, the most probable and satisfactory.

The first is, that of St. *Austin*; That Man's Case was more to be pity'd than theirs, because Man was by them Tempted, and deceiv'd by the Cunning of their Chief; But the Angels had no Tempter, none but themselves, their Own Pride and Ambition, to seduce them to so foul an Apostacy. There was nothing of Ignorance or Deceit to lessen the Voluntariness of their Sin, they fell in the Light of Heaven, and render'd themselves incapable of Pity. But Man, as he fell by the Devil's Malice, was the fitter Object of God's Mercy; and accordingly, as he was undone by Another's Wickedness, he was recover'd by Another's Merit.

The Second is, that when the Angels rebell'd, tho' Some fell, yet Others stood; Each of them sinn'd and suffer'd only for himself, did not involve a whole Nature in his Guilt, and so they all did not perish. But
in

S E R M O N II. 45

in the first Man that sinn'd all Men fell, All were Virtually and Federally in *Adam*, and the Decree of Death pass'd upon all Mankind, in Him concluded under the common Condemnation. And should God's Creation be thus destroy'd, and his Goodness defeated, by the Malice of the Devil? *Hast Thou made all Men for Nought?* says the Psalmist, 89. 47. That cannot be, so great Wisdom cannot do so great a Work in Vain; but in Vain it had been, if God had not shewn Mercy, and therefore was Man's Case, rather than that of the fallen Angels, matter of the Divine Commiseration and Pity.

Thus they Reason'd, and perhaps not amiss, but it will better become us humbly to adore the Plain Revelation of his Love, than curiously to pry into the hidden Secrets of his Wisdom; to ascribe all this to *the tender Mercies of our God, whereby he from on high hath Visited us, To the Great Love wherewith he Loved us*, as the Apostle speaks. *God so Loved the World*, says Our Saviour, *that he gave his Only begotten Son*; and We, taught by Him, for a Reason of this Great Mystery, say only, *Even so Lord, for so it seem'd good in thy Sight*, Luke 10. 21.

IV. Which leads me to the Fourth thing to be consider'd; and that is, the admirable Wisdom and Fitness of this Method, which
God

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God has made use of for our Redemption. *It becom'd that in all things he should be made like unto his Brethren.*

Whether God could have found out any Other means of restoring Lost Man, besides this of making Himself the Son of Man, is not only an Unnecessary, but a Presumptuous Enquiry; tho' some have ventur'd to go thus far, from the Natural Inherent Justice of God, and his perfect and immutable Hatred to Sin, and his inflexible Regard to the Honour of his Law, which was violated; and the Vindication of his Truth, by which he stood oblig'd to punish the Violation of it, with the Death which he had threaten'd; To conclude, that without so full a Satisfaction, as that of the precious Blood of his Only and Entirely beloved Son, he could not have releas'd us from the Curse, to which we were all justly Subject by our Disobedience. But forbearing thus rashly to *Shorten his Arm*, or to Limit his Wisdom, we may yet boldly affirm, that since He has been pleas'd to make use of this Way, it is, for That very Reason, to be believ'd the most fitting of all Others, and most Wise. And that in respect of his Own Glory, and the Benefit of Mankind.

1st, Of his Own Glory. This was the Ineffable Contrivance of the Divine Council,

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cil, that God and Man should be join'd in One Person; that so, as Man, he might become a Sacrifice for Sin; and, as God, make his Sacrifice worthy to be Accepted; His Manhood giving Him a Capacity to suffer, and his Godhead giving a Value to His Sufferings. Thus is God magnify'd in all his Excellencies; having, to the Triumph of His Mercy, out of the hidden Treasures of his Wisdom, excited by his Love, found an Expedient, how, both Sin should be punish'd, and the Sinner pardon'd; His Justice at the same time fully satisfy'd, His Majesty undiminish'd, his Truth preserv'd entire and inviolate, by a Person of Infinite Dignity interposing in the Offenders room, answering the strictest Demands of offended Omnipotence, and doing not only Right, but Honour to every One of his Essential Attributes and Divine Perfections.

2^{dly}, In respect of the Benefit of Mankind, and the singular Uses which we may, and should make of this gracious Method, which his Wisdom has pitch'd upon for our Redemption.

1st. For first, God has not only hereby secur'd his Own Honour, and Vindicated the Authority of His Law, by exacting so High and Full a Satisfaction for the breach of it; but has publickly also given the greatest Discouragement to Sin, that can possibly
be

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be conceiv'd, by so illustrious a Manifestation of his irreconcilable Aversion and mortal Hatred to it, in punishing it so severely, in the Bitter Sufferings and Death of Him, in whom He was ever well-pleased. In that He spared not Him, God has openly declar'd, and convinc'd the World, that He hates Sin, if Infinity were capable of Degree, even more than He Lov'd his Own Son.

2dly, By this Means of Christ's being made in Every thing like to us, and in this likeness familiarly conversing with Us, and fulfilling all Righteousness, God has both given Us a perfect and imitable Example of Holiness and Obedience; and by this means also taken away all manner of Excuse, that we might pretend to, from the Inequality or Impossibility of His Commands. By the Man Christ Jesus, without Sin, he has convinc'd us, both of the *Goodness* and the *Easiness* of his Law, which commands nothing, but what God himself, when he was made Man, thought it became Him to Do: Is not the ready and Perfect Obedience, which Christ in Our Nature paid, a full Demonstration how reasonable a Service God requires at Our hands, while he Exacts from Us no other Duties, but what are so Excellent in Themselves, that the *Son of God* was willing, and so Possible to Us, that the

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the *Son of Man* was able to perform them?

3dly, It behov'd Christ to be made like unto Us, for our great Comfort and Encouragement. In all things like unto Us: For he did not only take Our Nature, but all the Infirmities of it, and having been Subject to all the Evils and Temptations of Our frail Mortality, cannot but have a fellow-feeling of all Our Sufferings, remembering his Own; and be ready, in all Our Afflictions and Temptations, to support and deliver us, to supply Our Wants, and assist Our Weakness, and to shew Mercy, and to afford *Grace to help in time of need*. And this is the particular Use, that the Apostle here makes, of this Gracious Dispensation in the words immediately following the Text: *Wherefore in all things it behov'd him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a Mercifull and Faithfull High-Priest in things pertaining to God: For in that He himself suffer'd, being Tempted, he is able to succour them that are Tempted.*

Lastly, We have hence a comfortable assurance of an Equal and Mercifull Judgment at that great Day, when God shall Judge the world, by the Man whom he hath Ordain'd: For, for this Reason, God hath given him Authority to execute Judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Had it been allow'd to Us, to have chosen Ourselves a Judge, who could we

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have rather wish'd for, from whom could we expect a more favourable Sentence, than from a Man like Ourselves? one, who has shewn the greatest kindness, that can be possibly conceiv'd, for Human Nature; who is sensible of the Follicies and Infirmities, and Temptations of it; who will not require in Us the Purity of the Angels, or Unbody'd Spirits, for He experimentally *knows, whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust.* And surely we may conclude, God has not design'd, that Sentence should pass upon us, according to the rigour of the Law, but the mildness and mercies of the Gospel; since he has appointed him to be our Judge, who is our Redeemer, who is our High-Priest, who is our Intercessor, who is our Advocate, who is our Brother.

Thus we see, that upon many great Accounts, and important Considerations, it behov'd, it was highly fitting and reasonable, and advantageous; it was an Appointment of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, that the Saviour of the World should, *in all things, be made like unto his Brethren.*

I shall now draw some few practical Inferences from what has been said, and so conclude.

1st, Then, it is very meet and right, and our bounden Duty, that we should at all times,

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times, and in all places, give all possible Thanks and Praise to Our Merciful Redeemer, for This gracious Condescension, in abasing Himself so far, as to be the Son of Man, that he might Exalt Us to be the Sons of God. Should not we gladly join with that Heavenly Host, who (not Envyng Our Felicity, tho' so much prefer'd to their Once Glorious, but Now Fallen and Miserable Fellow-Spirits) usher'd in the Birth of God Incarnate, with this Triumphant Song, *Glory be to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men!* shall These, who have no Interest or Share in this great Salvation, be desirous to bow down and look into this glorious Mystery; and shall not we, who are so much concern'd, lift up our Hearts, raise up our Souls, to a devout Contemplation, and frequent and serious, and grateful Meditation of his Incomprehensible Love, who for Us Men, and for Our Salvation, came down from Heaven, and was made Man? What warmth of Affection, what Light of Joy, what Incense of Gratitude, should the Sense of so invaluable a Blessing kindle, and for ever keep alive in our Spirits? *Abraham*, whose Seed he long after took upon Him, was transported with the obscure and confus'd apprehension, with the remote foresight only of so great a Blessing, *He saw This Day a-far off, and was glad.* How should

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we then be affected, to whom the Son of God is actually come! What Thanks shall we render, what Acknowledgments can we pay, I do not say equal, but in any wise, suitable and becoming for such mighty Love; not in dim Shadows, as to this great Patriarch, the Friend of God, prefigur'd only and promis'd, but in real Blessings Substantially perform'd! Certainly the best way of Expressing our Joy, and Gratitude, and Love, is heartily to comply with, and, as much as in us lies, to promote and forward this Merciful Design of the Son of God, in being made Man! O Let not Us frustrate the Council of Infinite Wisdom, O Let not us do despite to the kindness of Ineffable Love! Let not us receive this Grace in vain! This *Grace, which has appear'd indeed to All Men, but bringeth Salvation to Those Only, whom it teaches to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly and Righteously in this present World, looking for his Second glorious appearing*; for which, if we have not rightly prepar'd Ourselves, it will be much better for us, that the first had never been. For, if we still continue in Our Sins, after such wonderful, wise, and gracious means us'd for Our Recovery, we shall be more Wicked, and less worthy of Mercy, than those Miserable Apostate Spirits, whom Christ pass'd by, and had no Compassion of, when
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he deliver'd Us. The Sins of Men, after Christ's having liv'd with them, and dy'd for them, are by many Aggravations made worse than that of the Devil himself. For he never Sinn'd against Example, being the first Offender, nor against God's Patience and Long-suffering, being upon the first Offence cast into Hell; nor lastly, against Remedy, there having never been any means offer'd for his Recovery. But for Us Men, all that the Love of God could will, or his Wisdom contrive, for Our good, has been made use of: And, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?* Let us not flatter Ourselves, or think that we have any Interest in any of those innumerable Blessings, which his being made One of Us, has procur'd for Us; if we perform not the Equal and Easy Conditions, upon which they are offer'd to Us; if we suffer him not to bless us, in his Own way; and we are by the Holy-Ghost inform'd how that is, namely, by *turning us away Every One from Our Iniquities.* Let us not then say within Ourselves, *We have Abraham for Our Father, and Him that took upon Him the Seed of Abraham for Our Brother,* if we go on in Our Iniquities, lest we justly receive the same Rebuke, which the Jews did from Him, when he was upon Earth: *I know that ye are Abraham's Seed,* says Our Saviour to those Hypocritical pretenders; that is, that

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you boast of your high Descent from that Great Man, and that according to the Flesh ye are what ye pretend to be, really descended from him; but yet you have none of that Spiritual, and more valuable Relation to Him, which only can Entitle you to those glorious Promises made to Him, as *Father of the Faithful*, and to *as many as are the Heirs of his Faith*: For, if Ye were, in this Divine and comfortable Sense, *Abraham's Children, the Works of Abraham ye would do*. Let us thus secure Our Title and Adoption, by bearing as near a similitude as is possible to this Our Elder Brother. If in Our Lives are express'd the resemblance and lineaments of his Divine Perfections, if in Our Conversations there appear any remarkable traces of his Innocence and Purity, his Sanctity and Love, his Humility and Meekness, his Zeal for the Honour of God, and the Welfare of Man, if we are thus conform'd to the Image of his Son, his Honourable True and Only Son by Nature, for this likeness to the First-born, God will Own Us also for his Sons by Adoption and Grace, nor will Christ be ashamed to call Us, Brethren. Let us then, since he has condescended in all things to be made like unto us, earnestly endeavour to be made like unto him. Let us not, by the Impurities of Sin, disgrace and dishonour that Flesh, which
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he has been pleas'd so highly to dignify, as to Partake of ; Let us Reverence, and keep Holy, and Undeſil'd, that Nature which he has ſo far honour'd, as to Aſſume and Unite unto his Own : And ſince he has Vouchſaf'd to take upon him our Fleſh, Let us, in return, as the Apoſtle exhorts, *Put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. Let us ſet all the Graces and Virtues of that Divine Life, which he, out of his great Humility, was pleas'd to lead here among us ; as a conſtant Pattern, and exact Rule, to model and faſhion our Own by ; that by a lively Faith in his Infallible Word, and a chearful Obedience to his Holy Will, and a ſtudious Imitation of his Perfeſt Example, we may, at laſt, be made meet to be Partakers of thoſe Joys, that he has Purchas'd for all thoſe that Love, and Obey, and Reſemble Him.

To whom therefore be paid all Adoration, Praise, and Thankſgiving ; be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, all Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both Now and for Evermore. Amen.

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SERMON III.

I THESS. IV. 11.

*And that Ye Study to be Quiet,
and to do Your own Business.*

WHEN the Gospel of Christ, *that Wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable*, was first publish'd to the World, such was the Opposition of the Lust of Men to the *Purity* of it, that for the sake of *That*, which they could not deny, and durst not openly condemn, they deny'd the *Peaceable Nature and Tendency* of it. It was indeed too *pure* to be *peaceable* to Them, and therefore they endeavour'd to have it believ'd to be so to all the World. Accordingly we find it, as frequently as falsely, urg'd against Our Saviour himself, and his Apostles,

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files, *who went about teaching, and doing good,* that what they taught was a Turbulent and Seditious Religion ; and that they themselves, the Publishers of it , were the Disturbers of States and Kingdoms, and the known Destroyers, wheresoever they came, of the common Peace and Quiet of Mankind. Thus the Jews, at the Preaching of St. Paul at *Thessalonica*, tho' *they themselves* were in an open Riot, *for They took unto them*, as the Text says, *Acts 17. 5. certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gather'd a Company, and set all the City on an Uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason ; yet had the Impudence to accuse St. Paul, and his Fellows, of the Crime which they themselves were at that time actually guilty of, crying, These, that have turn'd the World upside-down, are come hither also.* But this Charge, by which the Gospel of Christ was at first so Blasphem'd, by the unexampled Meekness of our Saviour, and the Peaceableness of his Doctrine, and the inoffensive Carriage of those that were the first Teachers and Learners of it, was visibly confuted, and utterly overthrown. And it were devoutly to be wish'd, that the same Imputation, which in those more pure and early times of Christianity was so notoriously false, were not as manifestly made true in Our time, *upon whom the Ends of the World are come ;* that there

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there were nothing of that restless and perverse Spirit among us, that Delights in Confusion and Disorder ; but that we had all carefully and faithfully preserv'd our gracious Lord's last Legacy, which he gave us, when he said, *Peace I leave you* ; and had no need to have been so earnestly entreated by the Apostle, in the latter end of the foregoing Verse, and the first of my Text, *I beseech you Brethren, that Ye study to be Quiet.*

Must we then be so passionately urg'd, must we be *beseech'd* to be Quiet ? What is there, that for its own sake seems to be more Desireable ? Must we make it a *Study* to be Quiet ? What is there, that at first sight seems to be more easy ? Yet how amiable soever this Duty is, such is the general Neglect of it, that it may seem reasonable to exhort, and to press, and beseech Men to it ; how *easy* soever it seems, yet it is really so hard, that it may well require our utmost Endeavour and Study to perform it.

I shall therefore, First, shew wherein this Duty consists, and what may be understood by our *Studying to be quiet, and to Do our Own business*, with some directions relating to the Practice of this Duty.

II. Lay

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II. Lay before you the Advantages that accrue from the right observing of this Precept of the Apostle, both to our Private Selves, and to the Publick.

First then, to *Study to be Quiet*, may imply an earnest and sincere Endeavour, to bring our Minds to that gentle and serene, and truly Christian Temper, that neither any inward Commotions of disorderly Passions, or irregular Desires, nor any outward Contingencies, or Assaults of Fortune, can be able to discompose. To work in ourselves an Unconcernedness for all other things, but the things that belong unto our Peace: To put ourselves out of the reach of being disturb'd, by rightly judging nothing, on this side Heaven, considerable enough to make us uneasy, or forfeit our Quiet for it; To fit ourselves, by thus abstracting our Thoughts from the Noise and Trouble, and Strife and Business, and Vanity of the World, for a Communication and Entercourse with God, and the Peaceful Spirits above. For in none but Minds thus Compos'd and Even, do the bright Reflections of the Deity and Angels shine: as in a Calm and Smooth River, all the Beauties of the Heavens, the Sun, or Stars appear in all their Lustre, and equally almost delight us when reflected there, as when we see them shining in the Firmament
 ' above;

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above; but if the least Storm, or Roughness come, all the glorious Images are immediately defac'd and disappear. This is the most happy and most desireable State, that can on Earth be obtain'd; this is that Peace which *the World cannot give*, that which *passeth all Understanding*, which it is easier for those that Enjoy it, to Feel and Experiment, than to Express; this is that which so notoriously distinguishes the Good Man from the Wicked, *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt; there is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* Isaiah 57. the two last Verses. But lest this should be thought an Idle and Contemplative Study only, an unactive Stupidity and unconcernedness of Mind, as the Stoicks; or such an Enthusiastick sort of Quiet, as *Molinus* and his Followers, (who have from it form'd to themselves a New Sect and Name) pretend to: The *Studying to be Quiet*, principally intended by the Apostle, is in the next words explain'd by *Doing your own Business*, agreeable to what elsewhere he commands, *That with Quietness ye work.* For it is nothing else but Idleness, that hinders Men from being Quiet, nor any sort of Idleness so troublesome as that, against which *St. Paul* chiefly seems here to caution his Thessalonians, *among whom he had heard*, as he tells them in the next Epistle, (the

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(the 3^d Chapter and the 11th Verse) *there were some that walked disorderly, working not at all, but were busy-bodies*; and whom therefore he beseeches here as Brethren, and with them all good Christians, Quietly to do their own business, not Impertinently or Uncharitably meddling with that of their Neighbours, nor impudently presuming to thrust themselves uncall'd, into that of the Publick. For the Original Word will bear both these Senses, and *ταῖς ἰδίαις*, as it signifies a Man's own proper Affairs, so also it as well may signify Private business, in Opposition to Publick business, and affairs of State.

I shall very briefly give you the Character of both these sort of Busy-bodies, with some Cautions against the Mischief of each of their Practices.

There is no Creature so generally despis'd and hated, and rail'd at, as a Meddler in other Men's matters; and yet how few are there, that are Innocent enough in this point, as to be able to justify themselves in casting the first Stone? or perceive, that in aiming at others, they may not hit themselves? since in some degree or other, most Men are guilty of the Vanity at least, if not of the Sin, of this impertinent Humour, of troubling themselves with things wherein they have no manner of concern. There are as many sorts of these Busy-bodies, as there
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are of Businesſes in the World: Some indeed are more Innocent than Others, as they who out of Levity or Officiouſneſs, are ſtill forward and preſſing to give Advice and Direction to all they meet, and will needs underſtand more of each Man's Affairs than he Himſelf, (and ſo far indeed they are not without Reaſon, if they judge of Others by themſelves, who are, for the moſt part, the greateſt Strangers at Home.) Or They, who will not ſuffer you to be Quiet, for their little Tales of all their Intrigues, and Adventures of the Place wherein they live; that know exactly what paſt laſt between This and the Other, and how far the Buſineſs in hand between the Parties is advanc'd; what was, or what ſhould have been done, at ſuch a Meeting, and who was the Entertainer, and who the Jeſt of the Company; and, overflowing with this precious Knowledge, are very communicative, and would fain have every Body as Wiſe (indeed a great Favour!) as themſelves. Such, and a multitude of the like Nature, are indeed, as I ſaid, of the more innocent Kind; but even Gnats and Flies, and the ſmalleſt Inſects, are as Troubleſome, tho' not ſo Venemous, as Toads and Adders: Theſe moleſt all Converſation, for the time they are Buzzing in it, as much, nay more, than thoſe more dangerous Meddlers, who have *the Poyſon of Aſps under*
their

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their Lips ; Such are they who Invent, or Carry about uncharitable Stories, who out of Malice rather than Vanity, by unnecessarily interesting themselves in Affairs, that in no wise belong to them, blow up the Coals of Strife and Contention between Friends and Neighbours ; who by false Suggestions, disguis'd like Truth, set the Father against the Son , and the Son against the Father ; and propagate sometimes hereditary Quarrels between whole Families. And the worst of it is, these Men have the greater Opportunity of Doing Mischief, they gain the easier access, and the readier belief upon this account, because they are Busy-bodies : for the good-natur'd, easy, credulous Man, when he meets with such a One, argues Thus to delude himself ; Surely this Man does what he does, and says what he says, out of pure Honesty, or a particular Love to Me ; Why else should He concern himself ? it is none of his Business ; and thus, for the very Reason why he should suspect, and shun, and abhor him, gives himself up to be betray'd by him. Others there are, whose whole Discourse and Time, is chiefly taken up in Censuring their Brethren, and passing still the most uncharitable Judgment upon all their Actions. And what Innocence, what Care, what Circumspection is able to escape these Men ? Is a Man of a Free and Sprightly Temper ?

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Temper? he shall be call'd loose and debauch'd: is he of a stricter Conversation, or a more solemn Observer of Religious Duties? he shall be a Counterfeit, and an Hypocrite; if *John comes neither Eating nor Drinking*, they say, *he has a Devil*; if *Christ comes Eating and Drinking*, Then the Cry is, *Lo a Glutton, a Wine-bibber, and a Companion of Sinners*. So difficult, so impossible it is for any, the most Holy, or Innocent, the most wary and regular, to be wholly exempt from falling under their Censures, whose Malice is ever awake, and on the watch, for real or appearing Occasions, to exercise itself upon. These are they, who will never suffer any Man's Commendation, (if they are forc'd against their Wills to hear and allow it,) to pass by them, without ripping up some Story or other as much to his disadvantage, or at least misinterpreting the *motives*, or *design* of those his good Actions, the Truth of which they cannot deny. But if ever They begin to Praise any themselves, then expect certainly in the close some ill-natur'd Exception, that overthrows all the Good that went before; whenever they speak well of any one, 'tis but to prepare their Hearers to swallow the easier the sly Insinuations, and most malicious Suggestions that follow: So justly are their Tongues compar'd, by the Psalmist, to a *Sharp Razor*, which, when

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most Smooth and Oily, cuts the keener, and gives the deeper Wound. Now, since of all the different Kinds of these Meddlers, in other Men's matters, there are none, no not the most Innocent, but are highly offensive, tho' not in equal Measure, both to God and Man; I shall propound some few Considerations, which, if well apply'd to each of these several Sorts, may serve for some Remedy against this Pragmatical humour, when we apprehend any danger of its growing up in us.

First then, let the first Sort of these Busybodies, those I mean of us, who are so free of our Counsel and Advice: whenever we feel this natural Itch of Meddling begin to infect us, consider what an insupportable Pride and Arrogance it is, to reckon Ourselves Wiser than every Body else, and to think no Man fit to manage his own Affairs, without our Advice and Direction. For, however we may cheat Ourselves, when we are so very forward to be doing every Man's Business, with the Pretensions of Kindness and Good-Nature; if we examine the Reason of this our being so over Officious, impartially, we shall generally find it at the bottom to be nothing else but Vanity and Self-Conceit. It would be very seasonable also, to put the same Question to ourselves, which the good Old Man in the Poet does

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to his overkind Neighbour, that would needs force his Advice and Counsel upon him ; *Tantumne abs re Tūc Otii est Tibi aliena ut cures, eaque qua nihil attinent ?* Have you so much leisure from your own Affairs, that you must be quite Idle, unless you take care of other Men's? and things that don't at all belong to You? Let us therefore consider, before we engage in other Men's Matters, how much Business we have of our own to do ; whether of Spiritual Concern, as the working out of our own Salvation; how many Sins to repent of, how many Lusts to mortify, how many evil Habits to correct, how many good Ones to acquire, or to improve ; or of Temporal Concern, as the doing our Duty in that Estate of Life, to which it has pleas'd God to call us ; how many necessary domestick Cares attend us, how many indispensable Duties we lye under to those, that are so nearly Related to us, that we can scarcely live without them? If we would thus turn our Eyes back upon Ourselves, we should find, that we had enough at Home to take up all our Time, nay more than all, and that we had very little need to look abroad for such Employment. But what should further prevail, with Men of Reason or Understanding, is the Danger of this Practice. It is impossible that he, that is always busy

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and projecting, should always succeed. But if it is his own Business only, that by his means miscarries, he who is the only Sufferer can forgive himself ; but if, without Occasion or Asking, he has been obtruding his Advice on Others, and thereby brought them into any ill Circumstances, is it not highly reasonable, that he should bear, not only all the Blame, but all the Damage too ? And how many Instances are there of those, who, out of this meddling Humour, and a vain Affectation of bearing the Name of Men of Business, have thrust themselves into Mischiefs, which, without great Management, and Art, and Diligence, they could never have brought about ? And how little Pity does the World generally afford these Men ? Does it not rather incline to say, What Pity it had been, if all their Endeavours had not had this Success ? that they should not be ruin'd, who had so industriously contriv'd it ? What also is the Credit and Reputation, which to their Wit and Abilities, they hence acquire ? for 'tis plain, that this they aim at, and would be thought notable, shrewd, understanding Men, and of more than ordinary Parts : herein, too, they find themselves miserably mistaken, if *Solomon's* Judgment may be regarded, as surely it ought, *It is an Honour for a Man to cease from Strife, but every Fool*

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Fool will be meddling, Prov. 20. 3. But that which most of all should deter us from this Practice, is the Sin of it. It is the Son of *Sirach's* Advice, *My Son meddle not with many Matters, for he that meddles much shall not be innocent*. Nay, *St. Peter* goes farther, and ranks an Offender in this Kind among the vilest Malefactors, even among those whose Crimes deserve Death, in the 4th Chapter of his first Epistle, and the 15th verse, *But let none of You suffer as a Murtherer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-Doer, or as a Busy-body in other Men's Matters.*

But then, Secondly, let those whom I mention'd, of all the rest, to seem the most excuseable, those whose Character agrees with that which *St. Paul* gives of the younger Widows, in the fifth Chapter of his first Epistle to *Timothy*, and the 13th verse, *idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies*; Let them also have a Care of flattering themselves, that all this while they are Innocent. Let them consider, that in those most exact and nice Scales, in which God weighs all the Words and Actions of Men, even Lightness and Vanity itself has Weight enough to Sink us. Let them remember, what the Wise Man says, *Prov. 9. 19. That in the Multitude of Words there wanteth not Sin*, and that our Saviour, a Wiser than He, tells

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us, that *every idle Word is to be accounted for.* And tho' in their little Tales and Railleries, they mean rather to make Sport with, than to Mischief their Neighbour, yet let them consider also, what the same *Solomon* says, *Prov. 14. 21.* that *He, that only despiseth his Neighbour, sinneth.*

Lastly, as to what concerns the two last Sorts of those I mention'd, namely, the malicious Whisperers and Sowers of Strife, and the uncharitable Censurers of their Brethren, it is needless to go about to prove, how great is both their Sin and Danger, since it is so universally own'd, and since they are so generally condemn'd, by the Voice of God and Man. The first of them is expressly reckon'd among those things that God hates, *Prov. 6. 16.* and that in more than One of those Instances which are enumerated there, *These Six things doth the Lord hate, yea Seaven are an Abomination to him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among Brethren.* And the Apostle, in the first Chapter to the *Romans*, ranks Whisperers and Backbiters in that black List of those, whom God gives over to a *Reprobate mind, to do things that are not convenient,* verse 28. and which
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those who do, are worthy of Death, v. 32. Nor shall we think it at all strange; that *Solomon*, as we but just before have heard, should so expressly declare, that God Hates such Men, whom we find by *St. Paul* here number'd among those that hate God, *Whisperers, Backbiters, Haters of God, v. 29, 30.* The Other, namely the uncharitable Censurers of their Brethren, lye under this Severe Prohibition of our Saviour, *Judge not, that ye be not Judged.* And who, that considers this, would dare, by so offending, to provoke God, *in whose Sight no Man living can be justify'd, to enter into Judgment with him?* Or if this *being judg'd* were meant by our Saviour of Men's Judgment only, yet what manner of Men ought they to be, in all Godliness and Honesty, that set up such an Arbitrary Tribunal of their own over the rest of Mankind? How little obnoxious to be Judg'd by any, who Condemn all? Whereas it is too manifest, that generally the most bitter Censurers are themselves the most Guilty: As it is excellently express'd and urg'd by a Learned Heathen, *Pliny* the younger; with whose Words, out of one of his Epistles, I shall end this Head, *Is it not, says he, frequent to meet with Men, who, tho' themselves given up to all Manner of Vice, and Slaves to every Lust, are extremely angry against the Vices of Others? yet so, that it looks in them*

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more like Envy than Anger, as if indeed they Envy'd them, they being still most severe upon those whom they most imitate. When on the contrary, there is nothing so decent, nothing so recommends and sets off, even those whose Innocence makes them stand in need of no Man's Good-Nature or Pardon, as Gentleness and Candor. And we may well reckon him the most perfect and best Man, who so forgives Others, as if He himself perpetually offended, yet so abstains from offending, as if he never forgave. Let us therefore, both at home and abroad, in our private, as well as publick Conversation, in every condition or sort of Life, observe this as a Rule, To be ever Severe and Inexorable to our Selves, but easy to be entreated and to give Pardon to Others, even to those who give it to none but to themselves, Plin. lib. 8. Ep. 22.

But if these busy Intruders into the petty Concerns of a private Family, or ordinary Conversation, or the little Dealings between Man and Man, are so offensive and troublesome, how pernicious and how insupportable is the Insolence of those, that with equal Freedom make bold with the Mysteries of State, and the Councils of Princes? And yet this is an hereditary Disease, deriv'd down to us from our first Parents, an inordinate Lust of knowing what we should not, and meddling where we are forbid. We long to be stretching forth our hands

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hands to the interdicted Tree of Knowledge, and disdain to be less than Gods; that is, than those whom God himself often dignifies by the same Name, Our Governours. We would be understanding what we han't Abilities to apprehend, and be managing what we do not understand; and if we can't arrive to do this; we think Our selves pretty well reveng'd, by Censuring those that do. Hence it is, that every place swarms so with Politicians, that Men set up for more Understanding in Government, than in their own Trades and Professions; that Matters of State are debated in the Streets, and the Shops, and the Market-place, and wherever else the judicious Rabble meet. Here 'tis agreed and concluded, How well all things would be order'd, if They had the Management; How happy would the poor Nation be, if their Wisdom might be heard, and their Counsel taken? How smoothly would the whole Current of Publick Business run, if They were to cut out the Channel for it, and direct its Course? If such Ministers, that they could Name, were remov'd, and such Methods of Government alter'd for Others, that they have, for weighty Considerations, prepared in their Stead? Thus are each Man's own Affairs neglected for the Publick, and as soon as ever they have ceas'd to follow

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low one part of our Apostle's Rule in my Text, *To do their own Business*, they presently proceed to go directly contrary to the other part of it, and make it their *Study*, *not to be Quiet*. For when they are resolv'd, that things shall never go right 'till they please them, and will never be pleas'd till all Affairs are carry'd on according to their Model, when are they like to be at rest, or to meet with any Satisfaction? And when, out of their own wild Imagination and Fancy, they form dismal Apprehensions and Fears of they know not what Evils, to happen they know not when, do not they truly and properly Study, not to be Quiet? do they not industriously Contrive their own Uneasiness? But their own is not enough, to be Mad alone looks too much like doing only their Own Business, they instill their Jealousies and Suspicions into Others, infecting all with whom they converse, with the Diseases of their distemper'd Brains, and can't endure, like other Madmen, to be distracted in the Dark, and without Company. If therefore we desire to keep Our selves secure, from the mischievous Practices of these more dangerous Busy-bodies, if we would preserve our own Quiet (and by that we contribute as much as in us lies, or belongs to us, to preserve that of the Publick too) we ought to be very cautious, how we

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let any of these restless and busy Spirits insinuate themselves into us. We ought to be extremely suspicious of their *First* Approaches, to consider what Sort of Men they are, whether they are not using us for their own Ends, and practising upon our easy Natures. Here all our Fears and Jealousies are not only commendable, but necessary ; we must look upon 'em as our most pernicious Enemies, that would rob us of the most precious Jewel of human Life, the Happiness of being Quiet.

For Fears and Suspicions, when once admitted, are like that Evil Spirit in the Gospel, by which the miserable Wretch, that is posselt, is thrown sometimes into the Fire, and sometimes into the Water ; that is, is violently carry'd away into the most pernicious and dangerous Extremes. And we ought to be the more obstinately resolv'd against so much as hearkening to any of their Suggestions, by considering how hard it is to stop when we are once in Motion, how hard it will be to recover our Footing, and be again fixt and stedfast, when we could not preserve our first Station ; for how much easier will they find it to push us on, that are going, than it was to move us, when we stood still ?

And this Resolution will be strengthen'd, and this Study to be Quiet promoted, by
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considering, that 'tis our Duty to resign ourselves up wholly to the Disposal of Providence, that orders all things most Wisely, and for our Good; to stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord, to be thankfull for the great Deliverances he has already wrought, not in the least mistrusting his Fatherly Care of us, and a Continuation of these or greater Blessings from Him, the gracious Dispenser of all that we have receiv'd before.

But have we a Mind to be Happy and Quiet, have we really, as we so much pretend, a Concern for the Publick Welfare, as well as our Own? let us learn of the Psalmist how to procure both, Psal. 34. 12. *What Man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy Lips that they speak no Guile, Eschew Evil and do Good, seek Peace and ensue it.* This is admirable and Divine Advice upon this Occasion, Amending our selves by Repentance and a New Life, *Eschewing Evil and Doing Good*, reforming whatever is amiss in our selves, not censuring the Management of Others, especially our Governours; *keeping thus our Tongue from Evil, and our Lips, that they speak no Guile*, is, holy David tells us, the sure and certain Way, to what we so much desire, *to see good Days*. On the contrary, to overlook Our selves, and lay all Miscarriages upon Others, is rather the Way

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to new Confusions, than Quiet, this being not to Repent, but to make a Satyr.

We are all of us also, that wish well to *Sion*, that have any regard to the Good of our Church and Nation, earnestly, both in publick and private, to *Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem*; knowing, that whatever other Endeavours are us'd, God is the only Author of Peace, and Giver of Quiet, according to that of *Elihu* in *Job* 34. 29. *When He giveth Quietness, who can make Tronble? and when he hideth his Face, who can behold Him? whether it be done against a Nation, or a Man only?* If therefore every one of Us would use but our single Endeavours, if we would turn each from his own Wickedness, and do that which is lawfull and right; and if, to these Endeavours, we would join our most hearty and fervent Prayers to God, we should no doubt find, and to our Comfort experience, that the Lord is True, whose Promise it is, *Isaiah* 32. 17. *And the Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever. And my People shall dwell in a peaceable Habitation, and in sure Dwellings, and in quiet resting Places.*

II. Which leads me to shew, Secondly, the Advantages of this Duty of being Quiet, and that briefly; because in what has already been

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been said, the Excellence and Usefullness of it has been plainly set forth, or at least hinted at. We read in the 19th Chapter of the 1st of *Kings*, that when God manifested himself to his Prophet *Elijah*, in Mount Horeb, *a great and strong Wind rent the Mountains, and brake in pieces the Rocks before him, but the Lord was not in the Wind; and after the Wind an Earthquake, but the Lord was not in the Earthquake; and after the Earthquake a Fire, but the Lord was not in the Fire; and after the Fire a Still Small Voice*, Then it was that the Prophet was first sensible of the Lord's Approach, then he was assur'd that God was there; then it was that he wrapp'd his Face in his Mantle, and went out and receiv'd his Divine Message. And in such a Gentle and Quiet manner does God still love to Display himself; not in the Earthquake, the Noise and Tumult, and Fury of publick Distractions; not in the Wind of wild pretended Inspirations, not in the Fire of over-heated and bitter Zeal, but in the still calm Voice of peacefull Quietness and Order, is the Lord still to be sought and found. The Quiet Mind is already, as it were, possess'd of Heaven, lives already in that Upper-Region, which the Ancient Poets and Philosophers describ'd and fancy'd a fit Habitation for their Gods, where neither Clouds were seen, nor Storms,

nor

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nor Tempests, nor Winds, nor Thunder heard, *Pacem summa tenent*, all above was Sereneness and Tranquillity. And indeed of all Other Virtues, either Christian or Moral, the Duties, that either by Christianity or Morality, we are bound to, none is so much and so properly a Reward to itself, as Quietness; It is indeed the Reward of all the Rest, No greater Recompence being possible to be had, or desir'd upon Earth, for the most Virtuous and Worthy Actions, than that Tranquillity of Spirit, and Ease of Mind, which the Reflections upon such Actions Naturally create. Quiet must needs be as great a Happiness as our Nature is capable of, since it is that which Men, in all Conditions, however they differ in their ways to it, profess to desire and to pursue. Ask the Merchant, why he ventures to Sea, or the Tradesman, *why he rises up early, and goes to Bed late*; the Labouring Man, *why he eats the Bread of carefulness* and sorrow? Ask all the different Sorts of the Busy-Men of the World, what they aim at with so much Danger and Trouble? and they with one Mouth will confess, that the end of all this Toyl and Bustle, is only to gain wherewithall to be at last at Rest. So that if we will believe their own Confessions, The Business of all Mankind is but *Studying to be Quiet*. That therefore, for the sake of which, all
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our other Actions are, must needs be more Excellent, than all the means that are us'd to attain it. Neither is Quiet the End only of all our most laudable Endeavours, but a great means also, and furtherance to the accomplishing the most Glorious Undertakings. The *Greatest* Actions, and those that have most *durable* Effects, are produc'd by Quiet and Order; for Noise and Vehemence disturb and hinder Business, and Violence is never lasting. The Health of the Body consists in the quiet and orderly Temper of it, and every Member's performing its own Office; the Health of the Mind, in the undisturb'd Evenness and Calmness, whereby every Faculty is at leisure to be regularly employ'd on its proper Objects. The same happens to publick Bodies, whether in Ecclesiastical, or Civil, or Military Affairs. Of all which the peaceable Subordination, and the quiet Obedience, that every Member shews in moving in its proper Place and Sphere, and so *doing its own Business*, is the only Strength and Beauty, and Health. All Commotions are unnatural, they are Diseases, and generally end in the Death and Dissolution of the whole Frame. Thus we see, that without Quiet, neither our Bodies, nor our Minds, nor publick Societies, nor Government it self, can Subsist. And surely, this Duty of Studying to be Quiet, if it were as well by us observ'd

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as it is Affectionately urg'd by the Apostle, would be follow'd with most Admirable and Blessed Effects ; it would hinder our Murmuring at our Betters, our Envyng Superiors, our Insulring over Inferiors, our Censuring our Neighbours ; all the publick Mischiefs, that spring from the pragmatistical Spirit of Faction, and the private Evils, that in Families, and between Friends, are fomented by busy Tale-bearers and Whispersers ; it would compose all our Differences, and heal our Breaches, it would make us Easy to Ourselves, and truly Useful and Beneficial to our Neighbours. For we are not by this Command so confin'd, to the *Doing* only of our *Own Business*, as to neglect any real Charity, or true Concern for Others, upon just Occasions. The Idleness, the Impertinence, the Sawciness, the Malice of Meddling, is indeed most deservedly condemn'd, and positively forbid : But all the Works of natural Kindness, of generous Friendship, of Christian Charity ; all the Duties that engage Men, as they are either Magistrates, or Parents, or Masters, to look after the Concerns of Others, that are committed to their Charge, or have a Dependance upon them : in a word, all good Offices and Assistance to those that really need it, are so far from being here Discouraged, that they are indeed Commanded. Nothing

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more nearly concerning our Selves, or being more our own Business, as we are Men, than to exercise all Acts of Humanity, *Humani nihil à Nobis alienum putare*; or, as we are Christians, than *To bear one Another's Burthens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ*, Gal. 6. 2. How much therefore may every One of us contribute to the publick Happiness of his Country, his Church, the Society wherein he lives, of his Friends, his private Family, and his own Person, by studiously endeavouring to possess himself of this admirable Temper of Mind, by taking as much Care, and as earnestly contending for *Quiet*, as Others do for *Honour*, or *Preferments*? (for so much the Original Word, *φιλονεικία*, which we translate *studying* to be *Quiet*, imports.) How much is every Body indebted, not only to pray for, but to study, and thus Promote the Peace of *Jerusalem*, which, by this quiet and humble Means only, can be so fixt and establish'd, as to be a *City at Unity within itself*. But, if thro' the restless Temper, or Peevishness of Others, these Publick Benefits are not reap'd, which, if all were of an equally calm and gentle Spirit, could not choose but Spring up and Flourish; yet the Man, who has thus prepar'd his Mind to the Study of *Quiet*, in Obedience to this Precept of the Apostle, has the Satisfaction at present to enjoy, within himself, that

Peace

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Peace which he sees others so foolishly part with, as not knowing the value of it: besides a most comfortable Prospect of that further Blessedness, of which this here is but a Tast, even the Everlasting Sabbath, and Rest of the Saints of God, To which God of his Mercy bring us all, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS III. 12.

*Take heed, Brethren, lest there be
in any of You an Evil Heart of
Unbelief.*

WHEN the Doctrine of Christ was
First Publish'd to the World, as it
carry'd with it the Clearest Evi-
dence of Truth, whereby it was able to ap-
prove itself *a Faithfull Saying*, 1 Tim. i. 15.
so it had likewise stamp'd upon it the most
amiable Characters of Goodness, sufficient
to render it *worthy of All Acceptation*, *ibid.*

A continu'd Series of Prophecies, deliver'd
down successively from Age to Age, for
above three thousand Years before our Sa-
viour's

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viour's appearing in the Flesh, all Visibly Centring and Receiving their full Accomplishment in Him, was an Unexceptionable Proof of his being Sent from God. Especially, when in those Predictions were foretold, not only such Things, as Omniscience only could foresee, but such as Omnipotence only could bring to pass: Those Mighty Works, I mean, which Our Blessed Saviour did. For, the Truth of the Strange and Invisible Mysteries that he Taught, he confirm'd by as Strange, but Visible Miracles that he wrought; and to give Authority to his Words, which were such as *never Man spake*, he Perform'd Such Works as *never Man did*. Now either of these taken singly, The Prophecies I mean that spoke of Him, or the Miracles that were done by Him, were a very convincing Proof of his Mission, and were therefore often separately urg'd as Such, by Christ Himself. *The Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* John 5. 36. And a little after, *Search the Scriptures, v. 39. meaning the Prophetical Writings, They are They which testify of me: For had ye believ'd Moses, ye would have believ'd me, for he wrote of me.* But if severally propos'd, each of these was a strong Argument; join'd together they amounted to an invincible Demonstration: And therefore our Saviour, when the Baptist sent
his

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his Disciples to ask this Question, *Luke 7. 20.* *Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?* willing to give full Conviction to this his Great Fore-runner, instead of a direct Answer, refers him to a Notable Prediction of the Prophet *Isaiah, 35. 5.* and *61. 1.* and fulfills it in the sight of those that came to him on his Errand; Go, tell *John*, says he, *What things Ye have seen and heard, How that the Blind See; the Lame Walk; and the Lepers are Cleansed; the Deaf Hear; the Dead are Raised; to the Poor the Gospel is Preach'd.* *Luke 7. 21, 22.*

Where he at once appeals, both to Prophecy and Miracles, shewing *John's* Disciples such Works, then, in their Sight, accomplish'd, but long before by the Prophet foretold, as None but a Divine Power could Effect, none but a Divine Wisdom could Foreknow.

Such were the Credentials, which our Saviour produc'd: abundantly sufficient to confirm the Divinity of his Mission, and consequently the Truth of that Doctrine, he was sent to Preach.

But the Gospel of Christ was, not only by the concurrent Testimony of Prophecies forerunning it, and Miracles attending it, thus Outwardly furnish'd with sufficient Motives, to Convince the Understanding; but so recommended by the Intrinsic Worth

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of the Holy Doctrines that it taught; as to be able to Attract the Will, and make it-
self as Affectionately Embrac'd out of Love
to its Goodness, as Stedfastly Believ'd for
the Evidence of its Truth. A Religion so
Spiritual, so Holy, so Pure; every way so
Worthy of God: so Righteous, so Cha-
ritable, so Merciful; every way so Bene-
ficial to Man: so Expressive of the Divine
Nature, and so Perfective of the Human;
(even without the assistance of the Open
and Sensible Demonstration of Prophecies
Fulfill'd, and Miracles Perform'd,) must needs
carry along with it such an Inward, and
Rational Conviction of its Own Excellence,
as to make it appear, not only *Worthy of all
Men to be receiv'd*, 1 Tim. 1. 15. but Such as
by None other, than God himself, could
have been reveal'd: Being not only a Copy
of his Will, but his Nature; not the Arbi-
trary Declaration of his Uncontrollable
Power, but the very Express Image, and
Reflection of his Essential Holiness. So In-
finitely did it exceed all, that ever pure Na-
ture, or Reason Unenlighten'd from above,
could aspire to; all that the Wisest Philo-
sophers, and Moralists ever taught, or the
best Lawgivers, and Founders of Repub-
licks ever Enjoin'd. It might reasonably
have been expected, that so Excellent a Re-
ligion as this, without so prodigious a Ma-
nifestation

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nifestation of Divine Power, as Visibly and Constantly attended on it, and gave Witness to it; should upon the account of its Own Worth, (if not from Conviction, yet from Inclination,) have been with Open Arms Embrac'd; should have made an Easy and Gentle, but a Powerful and Effectual, Conquest over the Hearts of Men. But the Effect was quite contrary: This Excellent Goodness of the Gospel, which ought to have recommended it, without the help of any Other Arguments; was the chief reason, that all the Other Arguments, which else must needs have taken place, where they did not take place, prov'd Ineffectual. Indeed, wherever the Soil was in any ways agreeable to the Heavenly Seed, there it took Root downward, and bore Fruit upward; in some Thirty, in some Sixty, in some an Hundred Fold, as our Saviour in the Parable of the Sower sets forth; where he manifestly resolves the Causes of the Reception of the Gospel into Honesty, and Goodness of Heart (*Luke 8. 15.*) The same which after Him the Apostle likewise does, *Rom. 10. 10.* affirming, that 'tis *with the Heart*, that is, from the good Dispositions of an Obedient Will, and well-order'd Affections, that *Man believeth unto Righteousness*. But on the contrary, where the Will and Affections were deprav'd, where Ambition, Pride, Avarice, Sensuality, or

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or any other commanding Lusts, had got Possession and Dominion over the Heart, there all the Powerfulllest Demonstrations of Predictions fulfill'd, and wonderful Works wrought, were not able to gain Credit to the Word. *How Can ye Believe,* says Our Saviour to the Pharisees, possess'd with the Spirit of Ambition and Pride? The more Spiritual, and Meek, and Pure, and Holy, the Doctrine was, the more Averse were Carnal Minds to entertain it; and that One Heavenly Sermon on the Mount, which Our Saviour Preach'd, was enough, with Earthly-minded Men, to obstruct the Conviction of all the Miracles that he wrought. As Unwilling as any Man was to part with his Vices, so Unwilling was he to receive the Law against them; All the Light of Truth could not convince those, who receiv'd not the Love of the Truth, as the Apostle speaks, *2 Thess. 2. 10. who believ'd not the Truth, because they had Pleasure in Unrighteousness. v. 12.* Thus it far'd with the Gospel, at its first appearance in the World, and the same Entertainment it has met with ever since; even down to the Dregs of Time, into which we are fallen: Only with this difference, that What was in Them, to whom the Gospel was first Preach'd, bare Infidelity; in Us, who have been Born where the Light of the Gospel has so long shin'd, is down-

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downright Apostacy : As the Apostle here hints to the Converted Hebrews, whom he therefore calls *Brethren* ; For in a Brother, any One that has ever given up his Name to Christ, an *Evil Heart of Unbelief*, is no less than *ἀπιστία, ἡ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ ἔσθ'.* Highly necessary therefore Now, if ever, is this Caution in the Text : *Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of You an Evil Heart of Unbelief ; and Ye turn Apostates from the Living God.*

The Heart, in Holy Scripture, is by an easy Figure of Speech, (familiar enough in Human Writings also,) taken either for the Understanding, the Reason, the Wisdom ; or the Will, the Affections, and Desires of Man. But more frequently, and here particularly, according to the best Expositors, for the latter : Wherefore, from the Words thus understood, I shall Endeavour Two Things ;

I. First, To shew that Unbelief chiefly proceeds from an evil Heart ; that is, from a *Rebellious Will*, from *Corrupt Affections*, and *Vicious Inclinations*.

II. Secondly, To enforce therefore this Caution of the Apostle, that We take especial heed, lest there be in Us such an *Evil Heart* : and that, both for the *Inexcusable Folly*, and the *Unexpressible Danger* of it.

I. First,

I. First, I am to shew, that Unbelief proceeds chiefly from an Evil Heart : And to satisfy us, how natural a Fruit Infidelity is of an Evil Heart, it will not be amiss to consider in general, how powerful a Sway Men's Wills and Inclinations have, in all Things else, over their Belief: And how Powerful, and how Universal, that Influence is, a very small measure of Experience and Observation will suffice to inform us. Every Day, and every Place, and every Business we meet with in the World, abundantly Supply us with Instances of it. What absurd and incredible Stories will pass Current with Men, that have a Mind they should be True? And what Difficulties can they Discover in most probable and likely Relations, if they heartily wish them to be False? What Certainty, what Evidence can prevail, or gain admittance, when Interest, or Passion, shuts the Door to all Belief? There is Nothing in the World, that Men agree so well in universally acknowledging the Truth of, as the Principles and Conclusions of the pure and unmix'd Mathematicks: But Mr. *Hobbes's* Reason for this is remarkable enough, which is, he says, Because Men care not much, in that Subject, what is Truth, as a Thing that crosses no Man's Ambition, Profit, or Lust. And the Only Cause, why none have ever

Writ

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Writ to contradict any of the most Evident Mathematical Truths, is, Because it never was the Interest of any Prince, or People, to have the Contrary believ'd; else he does not doubt, upon due Encouragement from hopes of Reward, Ambition, Self-Love, or other like Motives, but that the most Evident and Certain Principles in Geometry, might have been as much the Subject of Debate and Controversy, as even Morality, or Politicks, or Divinity. This sounds somewhat odd, and almost incredible at first hearing; but we must do him this right to own, that his Own Example made his Observation good: For He himself, after all his high Flights and Flourishes, over and over, upon every Occasion; upon no Occasion pour'd out in Praise of his Once beloved Mathematicks, especially for their convincing Clearness, and undoubted Certainty; as soon as his Vanity, and Ambition, and Self-Love, came to be concern'd in the Cause, by his being baffled and expos'd, for Pretending to more in his Way than he Understood, sets himself on Work to dispute against the plainest Demonstrations, with as much Vehemence and Ill-Manners, as ever any Dispute, of Right or Wrong, was manag'd with. Now he tells us, that there are full as great Cheats, Errors, and Falshoods, in the Proofs of Geometricians, as any other Men; *Geometrarum*,
says

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says he, *totam invade Nationem*, he proclaims War with the whole Race of 'em, and is forc'd at last to this Extravagant Exclamation; " *Either I my self, or all the Mathematicians in the World beside, are stark Mad!*" I made use the rather of this Instance, and dwelt the longer upon it, because it is of the Man, who, by his Writings, has been One of the greatest Promoters of Atheism, that this last Age has produc'd; That his Disciples may consider and observe, by their Master's Example, how mighty and controlling a Force, the Affections and Passions have over the Judgment and Understanding; and not wonder therefore, if they themselves, bringing with 'em a strong Inclination, and vehement Desire, to get rid of the Sense of Religion, should take even the trifling Sophistry of the *Leviathan* for no less than Demonstration.

And this strong Bias, by which Men's Wills and Desires draw over, and engage their Opinions and Belief, appears no where more visible, than where, upon the Account of the Infinite and Eternal Importance of the Subject, it ought least of all to bear any sway; namely, in Matters of Religion. And here it may safely be affirm'd, that the great & lamentable Encrease, and daily Progress of Atheism, & Infidelity, so much, & so justly complain'd of among us, had its Rise, not so much from
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any Rational Reluctance in the Understanding, pretended by Some, to the High Mysteries; as in an Unreasonable Aversion of the Will, too Visible in All, to the Holy Precepts of Christianity. Could we look to the Bottom of the Heart of the Generality of Unbelievers, we should plainly see, that 'tis not the suspected Truth, but the acknowledg'd Goodness of the Gospel, that gives indeed the great Offence. They deny the One, but it is because they hate the Other. In a word, the Opposition, that by most Men is made against Religion, whatever they may pretend, proceeds, not from the Difficulty to Apprehend its Doctrines, but from the Unwillingness to Obey its Commands; And the Gospel is rejected, not because in it the Objects of Faith are too Obscure, but because the Obligations to Holiness are too Plain.

That it is not for want of sufficient Evidence, to convince them of the Truth of Religion, is demonstrable from this; That they believe many, innumerable things beside, upon very much slenderer Proof. Nay, there is nothing almost in the World, that is believ'd, the Belief of which is not founded upon less satisfying Grounds than those, upon which is built our most Holy Faith. It must therefore necessarily be the Prejudice of the Sensual Appetites and Affections,
and

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and lower Faculties, that hinder their Belief: and for One Infidel, made so by a too weak Understanding, we may safely affirm, there are Thousands by a too headstrong Will. The Necessity of *denying all Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts*, of Renouncing the Pleasures, and Poms, and Vanities of this World, is so unwelcome a piece of News, to Men that are wholly engag'd, and as it were swallow'd up in them, that their first Care is, not to hear this distastful Message; and if that can't be avoided, their next endeavour is, to lessen and vilify, and, if possible, quite overthrow the Credit of it. Thus as St. Paul says, 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4. *If the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the God of this World has blinded the Minds of them that believe not, lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* Should they let this Glorious Light shine in upon 'em, it would shame and confound 'em: They cannot bear the Piercing of its Beams, and the Discoveries it makes, and therefore they wilfully turn away their Eyes from it, or obstinately shut and close them against it. They cannot endure to be forc'd to see, that they are constantly acting against the clear Manifestations of Divine Revelation, as well as the Natural Distates of their Own Reason; and nothing being so uneasy, nay so insupportable, to the very Nature

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Nature of Man, as to continue doing that, wherein he shall always condemn himself; they resolving still to continue the Pursuit of the Course that they have begun, are necessarily driven to devise all the Shifts that Wit can invent, for the smothering this Light, which to *their Condemnation is come into the World: For every One that doth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reproved.*

These Men say in their Hearts the very same of Religion itself, as the Atheists in the second Chapter of *Wisdom* do of the Religious Man, *It is not for Our turn, it is clean contrary to Our Doings; it upbraideth us with the offending the Law, it was made to reprove Our Thoughts, it is grievous unto us, even to behold.* No wonder then, if they would be very glad to rid themselves of such an Eyesore, that they should endeavour to destroy Religion from off the face of the Earth; just as the foremention'd Wretches conclude to use the Religious Person; *Let us Examine Him with Despitefulness and Torture, Let us Condemn Him with a Shameful Death, who would make us ashamed of our Lives.*

But it is not for the sake of the Shame only, which this glorious Light of the Gospel, shining in upon 'em, must and does necessarily produce, tho' that itself is sufficiently grievous and tormenting; but also,

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and

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and that chiefly, for the Fear and Horror that it strikes through their Souls, that they struggle so much to extinguish it. For admitted, it would not only shame, but terrify and amaze 'em, even in the midst of all their Jollity and Pleasures, like the Hand-writing on the Wall at *Nebuchadnezzar's Feast*, it would *make their Countenance change, and loosen their Joints, and make their Knees smite one against another*, Dan. 5. 6. And indeed till the Sense of Religion be conquer'd, till this Spirit, that would continually be haunting 'em be laid, till the dismal Apprehensions of a future Judgment, and an avenging God be remov'd; what Relish, what Satisfaction can there be, in the most alluring Pleasures of Sin? Whilst the Sword of Vengeance glitters over their Head, hanging by so thin a Thread, as that of Life. They therefore, as it is said of the wicked Elders in the History of *Susanna*, *Pervert their Own Mind, and turn away their Eyes, that they might not look up unto Heaven, nor remember just Judgments.* The Remembrance of just Judgments, is the first thing to be stifled and overcome, before a Man can arrive to any Pleasure in Wickedness. The Language of the Atheist is exactly the same in all Ages: they of our Time say but the Same thing over, that their Predecessors in the Book of Wisdom said before, *We are*
born

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born at all adventure, and we shall be as tho' we had never been ; Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good Things that are present, and let us speedily use the Creatures, as in Youth. Let us fill our Selves with costly Wine and Ointments, Let none of us go without his part of Voluptuousness, Let us oppress the poor Righteous Man, nor reverence the ancient grey Hairs of the Aged. Here the Argument they Use to excite One another to Intemperance, Injustice, and Oppression, is, That there is no future Punishment for Sinners, nor any Reward for blameless Souls. But would we know whence this Belief of theirs Sprung ? we are told in the Close of all, *Such things did they imagine and were deceiv'd ; for their Own Wickedness had blinded them, v. 21.* It was their own Wickedness blinded them first, before their Blindness confirm'd them Wicked. And therefore it is said, in the beginning of the Chapter, *they Reason'd within themselves but not aright,* that is, purposely to deceive themselves, they inverted the Order of their Reasoning, and so Reason'd not aright. For the Argument would have run thus, if they had dealt honestly, and durst even among themselves speak the Truth of their own Hearts, *We are resolv'd to enjoy the good things that are present, we will fill our selves with costly Wine, we will none of Us go without his part of Voluptuousness ; Come on therefore, Let this be Our*
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Belief,

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Belief, We are born at all adventure, and shall be hereafter as tho' we had never been. Thus shall all the Pleasures of Life go down with less Reluctance, and with greater Gust. And they, who are resolv'd to live like Beasts, are glad to entertain an Opinion, that they shall dye so too. Whereas on the contrary, They who lead a Virtuous Life, a Life becoming reasonable and thinking Men, have their Hope full of Immortality.

And this naturally leads to shew on the other Hand, how much the good Dispositions of the *Heart*, and the Inclination of the *Will* towards God's Commands, contribute towards Creating in us Faith, and a Belief of his Word. We thankfully indeed acknowledge, that *Faith is the Gift of God*; and so it may also be, tho' produc'd by the Will; for all the good Inclinations of the Will are the Gift of God also. The things of God, as they are Foolishness to the Natural Man's Understanding, so they are Enmity to his Will; and therefore when God gives Faith, as he gives new Light to the Understanding, so he gives new Motions and Inclinations to the Heart. So that whatever Disputes have been among Divines, some placing Faith in the Understanding, and some in the Will, it is wholly in neither; not Only in the Understanding, nor Only in the Will, but in the whole Soul,
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the whole Intelligent Nature is the Seat of Faith. But when we consider, what glorious Promises are made to Faith, and that it is strictly enjoin'd under Eternal Punishments to the contrary, we cannot choose but conclude, that it must have a Greater Proportion of that Ingredient, which only makes Actions good or bad; which only is the Subject to which Commands and Prohibitions can be propos'd, which only can entitle to Reward or Punishment, and that is, Will and Choice. But should we allow Faith to be seated in the Understanding only, as some Divines contend; yet That itself depends in some Measure on the Will: Inasmuch as the first Application of Mind, and afterwards the Attention and Dwelling upon any Subject, Worthy to be Understood (of which Worthiness the Will too makes itself for the most part the Judge) is altogether Voluntary. So that, tho' in Matters of Knowledge, the Will has no direct proper Concurrence, nor is the Consent of it strictly necessary to the Assent of the Understanding; yet it has such a tacit, but effectual Influence, such a domestick conjugal Authority, that the Understanding is seldom firmly, or long on that Side to which the Other Faculty is not inclin'd. Thus every Way we see, how much the Will is concern'd in producing and preserving Faith.

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And it is highly reasonable, that it should be so; that we may hereby make a Free-will Offering of our Belief, which if extorted from us would be of no Worth; that Our hearty Assent to the Heavenly Truths reveal'd to us, may be what *St. Paul* styles it, *The Obedience of Faith*; and that the Difficulty of Apprehending some of its high Objects might ennoble it, and make it capable of a glorious Reward. For as there would be no Praise due to the best Works, if either the Works were easy, or our Wills forc'd; so neither could there be any Merit in Faith, if the Objects of it were so plain, or our Understandings were by Demonstrative Evidence so Overborn, that we could not help Believing.

To conclude this Head, as on one hand the Love of this World, and Sinful Lusts thereof, make Men very backward at first to believe, but very apt to raise what Objections they can against a Religion so opposite to 'em; and catch at the least Shadow of Possibility, that may stay their Minds from thinking that True, which they heartily wish were False; and as the Continuance in Vice and Sin, both by a Natural Course of Working in 'em a settled Stupidity, and Habitual Blindness; and also, by the just Judgment of God, who, *because they did not like to retain him in their Knowledge, gives them*

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them over to a Reprobate Mind ; brings 'em by steps in the end, to the last degree of harden'd Infidelity, and downright Atheism; So on the contrary, a Love to Virtue and Goodness, first makes an Easy way for the Believing, and Embraceing the Truths of the Gospel, and by a constant Perseverance and Practice of the plain indispensable Duties, (the Grace of God accompanying and rewarding Obedience with further degrees of Faith) even the most abstruse and exalted Mysteries of Religion, are so heartily and firmly believed at last, as to admit of no doubt or wavering. Such a Christian's Experience, and Inward Perception of the Goodness, as well as the Truth, of Religion, is more convincing than the most study'd Arguments ; he is too much taken up in its Commands, to have any leisure to cavil at its Doctrines ; he relies with full Assurance on the gracious Promises reveal'd in Scripture, and finds too much Comfort in the Word of God, to raise any Doubts concerning the Truth of it. No more than a Man, that had given him a great Estate, and has the Deeds of it put in his Own Hands, would set himself on work to find out Flaws in them, and be himself the first that should question the Goodness of his Own Title.

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Having thus shewn, that it is the Goodness, or the Evilness of the Heart, by which we either *believe unto Righteousness*, or else *depart from the Living God*. I shall proceed in the

II. Second place, To exhort, that we take especial Care, *lest there be in any of Us an Evil Heart of Unbelief*, and that upon the Account of the Inexcusable Folly of Wilfull Infidelity, as well as the Inexpressible Danger of it.

For first, Because it is not for the Interest of the Wicked Man, that there should be any Truth in that Religion, which pronounces so severe a Condemnation to his Practices, and because he can't help therefore wishing, that there were no such thing; to conclude from hence that 'tis false, Is not this the most unreasonable, and most absurd Folly in the World? What can be more against the common Dictates of Reason, than when a Judgment is to be made in matters, that concern no less than Eternal Happiness, and Eternal Misery, for Men not to give, at least, a fair unprejudic'd unbiass'd Hearing? but to suffer the Understanding, that is the Judge, to be most shamefully Brib'd by the Affections, that are Parties; and instead of framing their Wills, to follow what Reason teaches, to find

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find out how Reason may seem to teach that, which their Wills were set and propos'd to Believe. Let Men only Act in this their Greatest, their Everlasting Concern, with the same ordinary Prudence and Discretion, that they use in other matters, things of common use and every Day's Business. They have a great mind this or that should not be true, they are undone if it is. But will this serve their Turn? or will their Wishes, be they never so strong, make that which they are so much concern'd for, either True or False in itself? No Man in his Senses ever thinks so, but immediately sets about providing against all those Inconveniencies and Mischiefs, which would certainly fall upon him, if what he has so dismal an Apprehension of should come to Pass. This, I am sure, ought much more to be the first Care of all those, that cannot think of an Eternity of Rewards and Punishments, without Horror and Dread; this ought certainly to be the very first Thing they set about, to remove all those Sins, and to put away far from them all those Wickednesses, that make the Thoughts and Belief of a future State so Terrible. This is a Just and Wise Conduct, and sure nothing less than this can satisfy a Reasonable Man. The other Course, that the Wicked Wretch generally takes, becomes only such as can
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be guilty of that degree of Madness, as to think Their Inclinations can alter the Nature of Things, and put God out of the World. Can any Man answer this Conduct to his own Reason, or be excus'd from the Imputation of unexpressible Folly, if he Eternally perish by it? There are indeed a sort of Men, that let their Works be what they will, think themselves Saints, and sure to be Sav'd, if they have but a strong Faith, and inward Perswasion, that they shall be so. This is a most Absurd, as well as Dangerous and Destructive Opinion, to think, to be Sav'd only by a *Strong Belief*: but certainly theirs is full as Dangerous, and Foolish too, that can thus think, not indeed to attain Salvation, but to escape Damnation, by as strong an *Unbelief*.

But Secondly, The worst of it is, which further shews the lamentable Folly of these Wretches; they can never arrive even to this, to an *Unbelief* strong enough for their Purpose. The thing that they shun still follows 'em, Truth ever, as it were, obtruding itself upon their Minds, and not permitting 'em to be so Ignorant as they would be. All their struggling to deface the Knowledge of a God, and Apprehensions of his Justice, and a Future Day of Recompence, by wilfully opposing the Belief of them, will not do their Business; will
not

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not quite Ease, or Quiet their Minds here, will not give any present Satisfaction or Repose. At least never so Effectual, so Lasting a Quiet, but that by Fits and Turns, sometime or other, on a Sick-Bed, or some amazing Accident, these Natural Impressions will return with greater Force, and stronger Conviction. God's Vice-gerent in their own Breasts, Conscience, labour they never so much to stifle it, will rouse up and assert the Being of Him, that planted it in their Hearts: Will assert his Being, with all the Terrors of his just Judgments, and represent Him in a much more Tremendous and Dreadful Figure, for having been so long, and with so much Contempt banish'd from all their Thoughts. *For Wick- edness, condemn'd by her Own Witness, is very timorous, and being prest with Conscience, al- ways forecasteth grievous things*, as the Wise Man tells us, *Wisdom 17. 11.* And of *Epi- curus* himself, whom *Lucretius* magnifies so much, and equals to a God, for this very Reason, For having got a Clear and Absolute Victory, as he speaks, over Religion, and all its idle Fears; Even of this mighty Boast- er, *Cotta*, in *Tully*, assures us, that Never any Man in the whole World was known so much afraid of those things, which he so stiffly maintain'd; no Man in his Senses ought ever to fear *Mortem & Deos*, Death and

Divine

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Divine Power. And it is well known, that the late great Contemner of Religion among Us, as Absurd a Reasoner, and as Dogmatical an Assumer (for these two Qualities are seldom separated) as *Epicurus* himself, was as fearful too, even of those things, which he would have made the World believe, were Bugbears only to frighten Children, and keep the Vulgar in Subjection. *Thro' Fear of Death, he was all his long Life time subject to Bondage*; and after all his false Outward Confidence, was at last forc'd to betray the Secret Misboding of His Soul, which he breath'd out with a Confession full of Horror, *That He was going to take a great Leap into the Dark*. So truly does the Character, that the Wise Man gives the Old Egyptian Magicians, suit with both the Ancient and Modern Atheistical Philosophers, *Wisdom 17. 8. Their Vaunting in Wisdom was reprov'd with Disgrace*; For they that promis'd to drive away Terrors from a sick Soul, were sick themselves of Fear worthy to be laugh'd at. Worthy indeed, to be laugh'd at for the Folly, but seriously to be pity'd for the Misery of it. For is not this a kind of Hell already begun upon Earth, to live always wishing, that there is no God, nor shall be any Judgment; and yet in perpetual Doubt and horrible Dread, that the One surely is, and the Other as certainly must be?

But

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But, Thirdly, The Folly and Unreasonableness of wilful Infidelity, will more eminently and conspicuously shew itself, if we compare together the two different Choices, that the honest Believing Christian, and the Wicked Infidel make. The One cheerfully and constantly trusts and depends upon God, for the Happiness both of this Life, and that to come : And by this means makes the good things of this World, which he thankfully Possesses, and innocently Uses, yield the more solid Comfort and Pleasure ; and even the Evil things thereof, when they fall to his Lot, he bears, not only with Content and Submission, but with Satisfaction, and Thankfulness too ; having those Joys before him, in which all his Sorrows shall End. This is a State, that gives such inward Repose of Mind, such Peace of Heart, such Spiritual Consolation, as, if it were possible to be false, yet is more valuable, and carries more present solid Satisfaction with it, than all the deceitful Pleasures of the most Voluptuous Life. The Heathen Philosopher could go thus far ; The Belief of Immortality, if this be an Error, *Libenter Erro*, "I err willingly and gladly. Who would part with so sweet a Delusion, were it nothing else ? Who would not cherish such an Opinion, that brings so wonderful Consolation with it ? But the chiefest thing of all is, that if
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this be an Error, yet there is no Danger in it. Unexpressible Torment, and Unsupportable Misery, are not the dismal Consequences of it. If the Believer should happen to be deceiv'd, no real Harm, no Misery ensues; he rests as securely in his Eternal Sleep, as the most Confident Denier of Immortality; and feels neither Sense of his Loss, nor Disappointment of his Hopes. But if the Infidel is Deceiv'd, and all the Judgments, and Eternal Vengeance, denounc'd against Impenitence and Unbelief prove true, as most assuredly they will, what Words can Express, what Thoughts Comprehend, the Misery of his Condition? So that seeing the Case so stands, that even in this Life, all things consider'd, the Religious Man has the better of the Unbeliever; and that after this Life *the Worst* that can befall him, which is *to be no more*, is *the Best* that can happen to the Other; One would think, it were not difficult to make the Choice which Side to be of, and that it is but reasonable to conclude, that He, that with a good *Heart believeth unto Righteousness* is the only Wise Man; and that He is guilty of the Desperatest and most Destructive Folly, who out of an *Evil Heart of Unbelief departeth from the Living God*.

I shall

S E R M O N IV. III

I shall make but an Inference or two, as briefly as possible, and conclude.

If then Wilful Infidelity and Folly be linkt so close together, *let us be no longer Fools but Wise*; and what Wisdom is, Holy Job tells us, or rather God himself, *for unto Man He says, the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil is Understanding.* Since we may arrive to the worst and last Degree of Infidelity, as has been shewn, by going on in our Sins, and falling in love with our fleshly Lusts; let it be our chiefest Study, our first Business, to Subdue and Mortify them; let us Root out those Evil Inclinations that corrupt and darken our Minds. Let us have an especial Care of continuing in any One known and wilful Sin, for whoever does so, has made one Step towards his departing from the living God, does at least say in his Heart, in his Wishes, whether he is aware of it or no, *There is none.* To how great a degree of Atheism may a Man be therefore advancing before he perceive it? for *the Heart*, as the Prophet says, *is deceitful above all things, who can know it?* Does not this then deserve our strictest guard? is not Solomon's Counsel highly necessary? *My Son keep thy Heart with all diligence.* Ought we not to watch with the utmost Circumspection against this damning Sin of Infidelity, that so subtilly
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and unobservedly creeps into Our Hearts? Ought we not, with Indignation, to throw out those Traytors within us, Our wicked Affections, that open the Door, and let in the Enemy into Our Bosoms? Let us all then Conscientiously set about this Work, let us banish all those Vices that betray us, those Lusts that blind us, those inordinate Desires that make us strive against the Truth of Religion. Let us cleanse our Consciences from dead Works, and then, and not till then, we may hope to be fill'd with a Living Faith. And then let us add to our Faith Virtue, and so proceed from Faith to Faith; from Faith Believing, to Faith Obeying; from Faith Enlighten'd by Knowledge, to Faith Working by Love. Being Actually exercis'd, and daily conversant in Religion, will give us a surer and more satisfactory Notion and Feeling of it, than the most elaborate Writings of Divinity; will make us more intimately and entirely perceive it, than those that have Read or Writ much of it, or heard or made long Discourses about it. Let us pour out our earnest Prayers, that God would by his Grace take from our Affections the Natural Pravity and Malice, whereby we are made Enemies to Spiritual Notions; that we may receive the Truth, not only in the Light, but the Love of it. And then let us make the Experiment

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ment of a Holy and Virtuous Life, *doing the Will of God, that we may know of the Doctrine*, and trust Our Saviour to make good his Word, in giving more Light to Our Souls, if we thus seek it after the Method He himself has prescrib'd to attain it.

Lastly, Since it has been shewn, how much the Will is concern'd in Faith, Let us have an Extreme care of cheating ourselves with this ordinary Excuse, this too common Pretence, Belief is not *in our Power*, *we would Believe if we could*. Let no Man thus deceive his Own Soul, but let him examine seriously his Own Mind, whether he speaks Truth to himself or no, when he says, *He would believe*. Let him, I say, deal sincerely with himself, and enquire impartially, whether He does not wish for, and favour the side of his Lusts against Religion; whether these Doubts and Obscurities arise from the Nature of the things to be consider'd, or from the Prevarication of his Sensual Desires; whether he is not sway'd by some indirect Means, that seem to have no Influence upon him, some private Favourite Consideration, which he is loath to own, but which governs him effectually: Let him, as he values his own Salvation, do himself this Justice, make this nice Search into himself; and he will by it perceive the Deceit-

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fulness of his own Heart, and will find his Dulness to proceed, not from want of Ability but Will; like that of those, of whom the Prophet complains, *Who hear, yet will not understand, and seeing, see, yet will not perceive; because their Heart is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of hearing, and their Eyes have they clos'd, lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and be converted.* Let him not then plead Inability to Understand or Believe, but Remember that generally all our Ignorance and Unbelief is Wilful, for want of Will to do God's Will; and with dread and awe consider, that when Ignorance shall come to be pleaded in the Day, when Christ shall come to *judge the Secrets of Men's hearts*, it may then amount to no better Excuse, than if instead of saying We were unable to comprehend his Doctrine, we should alledge in our Justification, that we were unwilling to obey his Law. What a Sentence such a Plea justly deserves, is easy to conceive; but that it may never be by any of Us Experienc'd, Let us *take especial heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of Us such an Evil Heart of Unbelief.*

SERMON V.

SERMON V.

LUKE XXIV. 34.

The Lord is Risen indeed.

THESSE Words are the Glad Tydings, which the two Disciples, that were going to *Emaus*, brought back with them to the Eleven that were assembled at *Jerusalem*, full of anxious Thoughts and Disquiet, and scarce daring to believe the Return of their late Crucify'd Lord. But as express and positive as they are, they are yet the Words of those very Men, whom but just before we find confounded and overwhelm'd with Doubt and Despair, and saying, *But We thought this had been He, who should have Redeem'd Israel.* The Words of Them, who look'd upon the first Relation of *Mary Magdalen* and the

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other devout Women, concerning the Lord's being Risen, *as idle Tales and Believ'd them not*; and accordingly, (before their Eyes were open'd) gave Christ himself this dubious and diffident Account of his own Resurrection, *verse 22, 23 and 24th of this Chap. Tea, and certain Women also of our Company made us astonish'd, who were Early at the Sepulchre, and when they found not his Body, came, saying, they had seen a Vision of Angels, which said, that he was Alive. And certain of them, that were with us, went to the Sepulchre, and found it as the Women said, but Him they saw not.* In such a Consternation were the Followers of our Lord, upon the ignominious and cruel Death of their Master. The pleasing Dream of that Temporal Grandeur, with which they had so long amus'd and indulg'd their mistaken Hopes, being fled and vanish'd, had left them Spiritless; and fall'n from the Heights of an Imaginary Kingdom, to the lowest Depths of real Misery and Despair. Instead of following their triumphant Leader to the Possession of his Throne, and a partaking of his Greatness and Power, they had been the wretched Spectators of his Majesty most scornfully Vilify'd by the insulting Soldiers; the Ensigns of his Royalty abus'd, and mock'd with a Scepter of Reed, and a Crown of Thorns; and himself, at last, Executed on the curs'd Tree,

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Tree, after the manner of the greatest Maf-
 lefactor, or the meanest Slave. Their Minds
 having been so long possess'd with Carnal
 Delusions, expecting so suddain and illu-
 strious a Delivery from the Roman Yoke,
 (not that True and infinitely more Valuable
 Redemption from Spiritual Bondage and
 Sin) No Wonder if now their Hearts fail'd
 them, if their Faith was stagger'd, and all
 the glorious Expectations of a Conquering
 and Princely Messias were dead, and bury'd,
 and seal'd up with Christ in the Grave.
 Neither the Miracles of his Life, which they
 had been so frequent Eye-Witnesses of; nor
 the Divinity of his Person, which they had
 believ'd and acknowledg'd; nor the joint
 Predictions of the Prophets, which they
 had read; nor the exprefs Promise of their
 Lord that *the Third Day he should Rise again*,
 which they had so often heard; were of
 Force enough to bear up their sinking Spi-
 rits under the Pressure of this vast Calami-
 ty, this, as they fear'd, irrecoverable Loss.
 With what an unexpressible surprize of Joy
 must we then needs imagine that they were
 seiz'd? who out of all these afflicting Doubts
 and Fears, out of the most disconsolate and
 dejected Condition of Mind, on a suddain,
 by the undeniable Assurances of their own
 Senses, being convinc'd of the Lord's Re-
 surrection, were themselves also rais'd, as it

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were, to Life again, and thus confidently assert the Truth of this joyfull News in the Text, *The Lord is Risen indeed.*

And what Testimony ought to be of more Authority, than that which is deliver'd by Them, who were so far from being Credulous, or easy to admit any Delusion or Imposture, that for a while they could hardly be brought to Believe even their own Eyes? So far from forging themselves a Counterfeit Relation, or helping to carry on a Cheat, by spreading about a false Story, tho' ready made to their hands, that even those Holy Women, People of their own Profession and Party, could not prevail with them to give Credit to what was True. It was by the Holy Spirit so ordain'd, that the Hardness of Belief, which the Apostles express'd, should so distinctly and unanimously be recorded by all the Four Evangelists; that the Belief of this Great Work of our Salvation might to Us, who were to come after, be made more Easy; that by their Infirmities we might be more confirm'd. And indeed, all the Generations of Christian People, that shall succeed to the End of the World, are in this Case more beholden to *Thomas*, who so long doubted, than to *Mary Magdalen*, who so soon assented: for the Weakness of his Faith has, not only made Ours more Strong, but obtain'd

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tain'd also a Promise from our Saviour of a Blessing, which else he had not had an Occasion to have Pronounc'd, a peculiar Blessing to those *that have not seen, and have yet Believ'd, that the Lord is Risen indeed.*

From which Words I shall first discourse of the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection.

Secondly, shew the Benefits that accrue to us by it, and what Returns, on our Part, ought to be made for it.

I. As to the First, I suppose, that in a Christian Congregation, it will not be thought necessary to insist long upon the Proof of that, without which, as the Apostle tells us, both *our Preaching, and your Faith is Vain, 1 Cor. 15. 14.* If it were needfull, I could produce the Testimonies of Angels and Men, of those Blessed Spirits that waited even upon the Grave-Cloaths that had wrapp'd up our Saviour, and attended in the Sepulchre, to certify the Devout Women, that came to seek the Lord, that he was not there, but Risen. I could recount the several undeniable Witnesses, those that Saw, Felt, Talkt, and Eat and Drank with our Blessed Saviour, after his Resurrection. I could reckon, to how great Numbers he shew'd Himself, how he was *seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve, after that of five Hundred Brethren*

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at once, the greater Part of which remain'd even then alive, at the time when St. Paul testify'd this to the Corinthians; after that, how he was seen of James, then of all the Apostles: and lastly, how in a Wonderful and Glorious Manner, he appear'd to St. Paul also out of Heaven. Evidences as full and clear, as any History or Records, Sacred and Profane, can produce for the most universally received Truth. Now, to relate the idle and absurd Forgeries, which in Opposition to a Truth, attested by such a *Cloud of Witnesses*, the Malice of the Jews and the High Priests gave out, I say to Relate them is to Confute them. For, is it worth a serious Examination, How an inconsiderable Company of poor disconsolate Wretches, so frightened and dismay'd, that most of them fled and deserted their Master, as soon as he was taken; and the stoutest and boldest of them deny'd Him soon after; should, as soon as he was so openly and shamefully put to Death, receive on a suddain so strange and unheard of Courage, as to undertake so rash and odd an Adventure, as stealing a dead Body from a Band of Soldiers, set on purpose to guard it? And this too in order to have it believ'd, that he was risen from the Dead, by the Jews, who Crucify'd him for a Malefactor; which They themselves, who took him for the Son of God, even

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even when it was done, could scarce believe. So wild and improbable a Story, ought to be supported, as the High Priests in their Wisdom thought, by sufficient Witnesses, to make it pass current : and indeed they hir'd Such, as were exactly suited to the Tale they were to swear to ; for the Soldiers convincing Proof of the Matter of Fact was, that at that time the Deponents were indeed asleep. If any thing more material, or that carry'd any manner of Likelihood or Appearance of Reason, could have been objected against our Saviour's Resurrection, the High Priests wanted not Malice to have urg'd and improv'd it ; nor would the Holy Treasury have been backward to Disburse, nor the Soldiers to Receive, the Price of a more Plausible and Coherent Perjury. But out of their own Mouths, are the Enemies of the Resurrection condemn'd ; while the grossness of their Diabolical Lyes, adds further Lustre to Divine Truth ; and had we less Assurance of it than we have, from the most undoubted and sacred Relations, yet the Weakness of whatever has, or can be, invented against it, were sufficient to make us conclude, *That the Lord is Risen indeed.*

I will only take notice, on this Head, of one Thing further, for which the Word *veritas*, *indeed*, here in the Text, gives a fair Occasion : which is, That our Lord, as he suffer'd

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suffer'd in a true and proper Body ; so with the same true Body , that was Nailed to the Cross , he again rose from the Dead. For, tho' after that *last Enemy, which was to be Destroy'd*, which was *Death*, had been by our Saviour overcome, and he now being Risen once, to Dye no more, his Body receiv'd an infinitely greater Perfection of Brightness and Glory, than ever before his Death ; much more, than even at the Transfiguration on the Mount , where *his Face did shine as the Sun, and his Garment was as white as Light*. Tho' it was so pure and refin'd, as to appear or vanish out of their Sight , whenever the Lord pleased ; and even when the Doors were shut, came in and stood in the Midst of them ; in short , tho' it was a Glorify'd Body, it was nevertheless a True Body, and that very Body, which hang'd on the Tree ; as the Wounds of the Nails and the Spear, which he offer'd to be handled and felt, manifestly did convince. *Quomodo enim non Corpus*, saith St. Ambrose, *in quo manebant Insignia Vulnerum & Vestigia Cicatricum, quae Dominus palpanda obtulit* ? How could that be other than a Body , in which were still remaining, the Marks of the Wounds, and the Prints of the Nails , which the Lord offer'd to be felt, and handled by his Disciple ? Which , as that Father in the same place piously observes , should be of Force, not only

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only to confirm our Faith, but withall to stir up and exalt our Devotion ; by considering, that even in That glorify'd Body, with which he design'd soon after to ascend to Heaven, he would wear the Marks of our Deliverance, and choose to carry up, as a well-pleasing Sight to his Father, imprinted on Himself, the Price of Mankind's Redemption. Now the right Understanding that this Body, wherein our Saviour rose, was Real, and no Fantom, or Shadow, or assum'd Shape, as some Hereticks have vainly imagin'd, is of further Use, for our Instruction how we should believe that Article in our Creed, which concerns the Resurrection of our own Bodies. For, as sure as Christ's was, so sure shall our Bodies be, rais'd also ; and if we are further Inquisitive, as the *Corinthians* were, *How are the Dead rais'd, and with what Body do they Come ?* if this Inquisitiveness proceeds from any Disbelief of the Substance of this Article of our Faith, as it is plain theirs did, (*for there were among them, that said, the Dead Rise not again*) we deserve that quick and severe Return, which *St. Paul* makes to such an Enquirer, *Thou Fool* ; and receive Instruction from Him in that admirable Chapter, the 15th of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* ; where from Natural and Obvious Examples, he abundantly proves and illustrates

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strates our Resurrection. But if we are, as we ought to be, fully assur'd and confirm'd in the main Truth of this Article, and are curious only to pry a little farther, and know the Manner and Form in which this must be; the only safe Way in this Speculation, is always to have regard to what we have learn'd, concerning our Saviour's Resurrection, and with what Manner of Body he arose. For his Rising from the Dead, as it is the Earnest, so it is the Example also, of what Ours must be. And therefore, we should rest satisfy'd with what the Apostle tells us in the 3^d Chap. of the *Philippians*, and the last verse, *He shall change our vile Body, that it may be like his glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able to Subdue all things to Himself.*

I come, Secondly, to shew the Benefits that accrue to us by the Resurrection of Christ. But what is it that I undertake? what thought can conceive the Excellence, or comprehend the Value? what Tongue can express the Nature, or reckon up the Number of the Blessings, that flow from this our multiply'd Salvation? This is the Ground-work of our whole Faith, the Assurance of all our Hopes, the Perfection and entire Consummation of the Redemption of Mankind. By his Cross and Passion, his Death
and

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and Burial, and Descent into Hell, was shewn the Love of the Son of Man; but by overcoming all these, and rising again, was demonstrated the Power of the Son of God. He could have descended from the Cross, when the insulting Jews challeng'd him to shew, that Proof of his Divinity. But, it was a far greater thing, to Destroy Death for ever, by Rising up from the Grave, than to Save his Life once, by coming down from the Cross. Tho' on the Cross our Salvation might have been compleated, for That was the High Altar, on which was offer'd that Spotless and Compleat Sacrifice, which was of *Virtue enough*, to atone for all Sin, and Reconcile Mankind to God; On That a Price was paid of *Value enough*, to satisfy the extreamest Rigour of Divine Justice; On That was shed that Blood, each Drop of which, was of *Merit enough*, to be a sufficient Ransom for the whole World; nay, for more Worlds, if there were more, than are Sinners in this: Yet, where could our Faith have found assurance of this Satisfaction, or apply'd it to ourselves? where could our Hopes have had any hold or support, if Christ had still remain'd in the Grave? 'Tis not therefore said by His Death, but *By the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, we are begotten again to a lively Hope*, 1 Pet. 1. 3. This Resurrection of our Saviour it was,
Thar

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That first *brought Life and Immortality to Light*. By This he rescu'd Us from that perpetual Slavery, in which the Apprehensions of Death so long held Captive the Spirits of Mankind, and as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* ch. 2. speaks, *Deliver'd them, who thro' fear of Death, were all their Life-time subject to Bondage*. What a confus'd and wretched State was Life, while the greatest part of it was spent in groping in the dark, to find what was to follow after? What Comfort could be sincere, what Enjoyment not sour'd by reflecting, that every Moment of Enjoyment was one Step farther, never to be trod back again, towards a dark Precipice, prepar'd for all things Living, from whence there was never yet a Return, or an Account? To heal these Natural Fears and Disquiets, which stuck so close, and stung so deep, not the vulgar Minds only, but often the most Brave, and chiefly the most Thinking and Wise, what weak Remedies did Natural Wisdom or Philosophy supply? There is no solid Comfort to be found, but in Truth only; and doubtless *Seneca*, or *Socrates*, have nothing that can persuade, or satisfy upon these Occasions. They were in the Ignorance, that Blinded all Men at first: They knew not, that Death was a Punishment for the Sin of Man, impos'd upon him to expiate his Crime, necessary to cleanse him

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him from Sin, and which alone can deliver the Soul from the Lusts of the Flesh, which even Saints are subject to, whilst they live in this World : They, I say, knew not this, but thought that Death was Natural to Man, and all the Discourses, they grounded upon this false Principle, are so vain and empty, that they only serve to shew in the general, how Weak Man is ; seeing the greatest Productions of the Wisest Men, are so mean and childish. For what faint Glimmerings had the most Virtuous Livers, or most Searching Philosophers, concerning Immortality ? Some of them had indeed, most noble and elevated Thoughts concerning it ; and from the Excellencies and Perfections, which they found the Soul endu'd with, from the Celerity of its Motion, the Extent of its Comprehension, the Subtilty of its Reasoning, and all its other admirable Operations and Faculties, were very desirous to believe, that whatever was of so Divine a Nature could never dye ; and extremely loath they were, to think this best Part of themselves, less than Immortal. But all this was only a pleasing Amusement, a Dream of Fancy, that the more they consider'd and study'd, left them the more amaz'd and confounded. For what was to become of this active Inhabitant, that led them into all these sublime Speculations, if it had been certain, that
after

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after its Dissolution it should survive, Whether it was to be cloath'd with Air, or some finer Body, and fly about the Earth at its Will, or retire to some happy Fields, and pleasant Gardens; or inhabit some Star, or whatever other Place or Office, the Fancies of the Poets, or Philosophers ever assign'd the Soul after Death, that was still altogether uncertain, and in the dark.

Nay, the Jews themselves, the peculiar People of God, distinguish'd from the rest of Mankind, by a more immediate Revelation, and a Law given 'em from Heaven, written by the Finger of God himself, seem to have had but a very imperfect and faint Apprehension of this future Life and Immortality, which our Saviour first brought to Light. Indeed some few of the Best and Wisest among 'em, had learn'd from Scripture, *That the Soul of Man should ascend into the hands of God that gave it:* But the generality were so wholly taken up with the temporal Blessings, and worldly Goods, that were the only Rewards, that their Law promis'd to the Performers of it, that they rested there, and had no further Prospect of a Blessed Immortality. But then, as for a Life of the *Body* after Death, that That also could be rais'd, and so glorify'd as to be Immortal, that the scatter'd Particles of all that Dust, which for so many thousand Years has made
up

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up so many Millions of Men, into whatsoever Shapes or Forms since converted, whether in Earth, or Air, or Sea, or Fire, should be again united and compose distinctly and severally each the same Body, which it did before, and from thenceforth become no longer subject to Change, Corruption, or Mortality; This, I say, was such a Mystery, as no wonder that it never so much as enter'd into the most speculative Brain of all the Philosophers, nor so much as by any far distant or doubtful beam discover'd itself. No, this glorious Exaltation of our Nature was reserv'd from all Ages by our Saviour, that He might declare it first Himself, and give both the first Experimental Proof and Example of it in Himself.

Being then thus rais'd above whatever Dignity our Nature was ever thought, or could be conceiv'd, capable of; thus freed from that anxious Torment of Mind, which for ever would have accompany'd the dark Notions which the World before had of a Future State, thus rescu'd from the Slavish Fears that debas'd our Spirits, asserted into Liberty from the Power of Death, a Way shewn Us to the same Place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before; can we do less in Gratitude to this Captain of our Salvation, than to strive to follow him, to rise with him, and seek those things that are

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above?

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above? Can we do less than endeavour, with the most intense Zeal and fervent Devotion, to entertain the Memory of this great Victory of our Lord's? Especially at and about the time of that great Festival instituted for that Purpose, This chiefest of all the Church's Festivals; This that *St. Chrysostom* calls, ἡμέρα οὐ γὰρ μέγας ἀλλὰ ἐὺαγαθὴ, a Festival celebrated not on Earth only, but in the Highest Heavens. For, as that Holy Father goes on, if there be Joy in Heaven for the Conversion of one Sinner only, How much greater the Exultation, for the whole Race of Mankind being snatch'd out of the Hands of Satan and Death? and what more proper or seasonable Meditation can we entertain, than to admire and adore the Glory and the Divine Might of our Saviour, triumphing in their own Kingdoms, over all the Baffled Powers of Death and Hell, breaking asunder it's strongest Bars, and, as the true *Samson*, of whom the other was but a Type and Shadow, bearing away the very Gates of it, and opening from thence a Passage for all Mankind to Life and Immortality. For tho' we dare not presume, as some of the Church of *Rome* have done, to give a punctual Journal of our Saviour's Infernal Expedition, nor follow him thro' all the gloomy Mansions of Hell, describing all its Territories
and

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and Dominions, thro' which he made his Victorious Progress, as exactly as if we had taken an actual Survey and Map of them; yet we may with Assurance enough take up a Triumphal Song and Hymn of Praise, to receive and welcome him in his miraculous Return from those dismal Regions of Darkness; being by Divine Authority certify'd, that He there *by Death had overcome Him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil.* And what should more enflame us with the most ardent Expression of Love and Gratitude, than to contemplate further, that this cruel Conflict, this difficult Exploit, and laborious Warfare, consummated in Entire and Everlasting Victory, was undertaken not for Himself, who was Immortal, *God blessed for Ever*, but for Us wretched Men that were Dead? Every way Dead, Dead in our Sins, and for them deservedly given Up for ever to the second Death, to the Power of Hell and tormenting Spirits, had not the Seed of the Woman thus crush'd the Serpent's Head, and no longer left any Sting to Death, or Victory to the Grave. How cautious then should we be of offending against such unexampled Goodness, how fearful of committing any thing that may make us unworthy of this great Salvation, so dearly purchas'd for us, how apprehensive of the dreadful Consequences

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quences and destructive Nature of Sin, how full of Devout Hatred and stedfast Resolution against that, which as it involv'd all Mankind in that deplorable State, from which no Power less than that of the Son of God could have rescu'd them, so if again Entertain'd and Cherish'd, can still, as to our part, defeat all the Advantages of Christ's Glorious Victory, and plunge us yet deeper than we were; whence there are neither Hopes nor Possibility of a new Redemption! How should the Consideration of what Wonders have been wrought for Us, engage us with all our Powers and Faculties both of Body and Soul, to endeavour to live up to the most Holy Rules of our Lord, knowing that tho' he is Risen and Ascended, it is but in Order to come again in Glory to Judge that World whose Resurrection he achiev'd? For what will all these noble Contemplations of the greatness of these his Victories for us, signify? what Consolation will it be to know, that when we put off this troublesome Flesh, we shall not sleep Eternally, but rise and behold the Glory of our Lord coming with Thousands of Angels in the Clouds? nay rather, what Confusion, what Terror, what insupportable Dread must it create, if reflecting upon our selves, we find that we are so ill prepar'd for the Lord's second Coming, that it had
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been happy, nay, much happier for us, that the First had never been? What Satisfaction or Comfort is it likely to afford to an imprison'd Malefactor, or notorious Criminal, to entertain him with Discourses of the mighty Pomp and glorious Solemnity in which he that is to give Sentence upon him shall appear? what Support or Relief can be expected from such a Ones Contemplating on the great State of his Trial, and the Majesty of his Condemnation? Certainly they who live like Sadducees, tho' they call themselves Christians, altho' Christ is risen, nay, because he is risen, *are of all Men most miserable.* To them, and to Them only, is the Resurrection of Christ a matter of Joy and Unspeakable Consolation, over whose whole Lives and Conversations, over all whose Thoughts and Words and Actions this Belief has so Powerful an Influence, as to keep 'em in a constant and reverential Awe of the great Majesty of their Judge, as well as in a perpetual Course of Gratitude and Praise and Love to their Redeemer.

To whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be all Honour and Glory and Praise both now and for evermore. Amen.

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SERMON VI.

ROM. VI. 21.

What Fruit had ye then in those Things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the End of those Things is Death.

AS our First Parents were they from whom all Mankind was propagated, and as thro' the whole vast Family of the World, there are visible Marks of our Relation one to another, and a common Likeness wherein we all agree; So their Sin was the Parent of all the Sins that have, or are, or shall be Committed to the End of the World; and This unhappy Offspring too, tho' so infinite in Number and Variety, do yet all

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agree in some Resemblance to their First Original ; *Facies non omnibus Una , Nec Diversa tamen ; qualem decet esse Sororum* ; They all bear Likeness enough to each other, to prove themselves of the same Family , and deriv'd from the same Stock ; Even that First Disobedience of *Adam*, (as all the Sins, that are descended from it) was Unprofitableness and Vanity in the Enjoyment, Shame and Confusion in the Consequence, and in the End Destruction and Death. For what Fruit gather'd our first Father from the forbidden Tree ? what gain'd he by it ? Knowledge of Good and Evil ? he did indeed : but of Good lost, and Evil got. What immediately follow'd ? He saw himself naked, and was ashamed, and what was the End of all but Death ? *for in the Day that he eat thereof*, He, and in Him all his Posterity, *did surely Dye*. Yet tho' of so pernicious and deadly a Nature, how soon did Sin overspread the Face of the Earth ? With the Generations of *Adam*, which grew so soon to be so vastly Numerous, it made an equal Progress ; and as Man, the Work of God's hands, obey'd his Blessed Command, *Encrease and Multiply* ; So Sin, the Work of the Devil, seem'd to have had a Curled Command from Him, and accordingly that too *was Fruitfull and Multiply'd and Replenish'd the Earth*. Whatever new
Cities

S E R M O N VI. 137

Cities were Built, wherever new Colonies were Sent forth, Murder and Rapin and Luxury and Lust and all other Wickedness followed and kept equal pace; and the whole History of the Beginning of Nations, and Rise of Monarchies, is nothing else but an Account of the new Territories and Conquests and enlarg'd Dominions of Sin. This then being the most Universal Contagion spread over all the World, as general an Antidote, as universal a Remedy ought to be sought out and apply'd to it. And my Text seems to be of this Nature; for it discovers the whole Progress of Sin, in its first Commitment, its immediate Consequence, its last End; it insinuates itself into all the different Sorts of Mankind likely to be inveigled by it, by Motives suitable to each one's natural Inclinations and Passions; Those of a more sensual or sordid Mind, whom Sin flatters either with Hopes of Profit or Pleasure, it teaches to consider, what Fruit is in it: To the more generous and noble Spirits, it uses the powerfull Argument of the Shame and dishonourable Nature of it: and to those, with whom Fear has a greater Force, the more strong and universally prevailing Argument, Death: thus does our great Apostle in these Words, as elsewhere he says of himself, *Become all things to all Men, that if possible He may save some.* There

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There are manifestly in my Text three Propositions :

I. That even in the Committing of Sin there is not that Satisfaction, which Men expect from it ; *What Fruit had you Then in those Things ?*

II. That however Satisfactory or Pleasant it is, yet Sin is really Shameful and Base ; *Whereof Ye are now asham'd.*

III. That tho' it yielded never so much Fruit and Satisfaction, tho' it were never so Creditable and in Repute, yet the End of those Things is Death.

I. I shall First shew that even the Enjoyment of Sin is far from giving that Satisfaction, which, by the so eager pursuit of it, Men seem to expect from it. So perverse a Mind as to love Sin only for Sinning Sake, and the mere Malice of Disobedience, as it is proper to the damn'd Spirits, so it is most commonly rather the Effect and Punishment of Sin, than the Motive to it ; and is seldom found but in those, who, having long resisted God's good Grace that should lead them to Repentance, are given over to a Reprobate hardness of Heart to *Work all Uncleanness with Greediness*. There must therefore of necessity be some more bewitching Enticement, some more tempt-
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ing Bait laid, some more colourable Pretence to draw Men in : and Sin, as it is of *its Father the Devil*, so *His Works it will do* ; His, who was a *Liar from the beginning*. It will Fawn and Flatter, make great Professions, and large Promises, it will use us as Satan did our Saviour, raise us in our Imaginations above the Pinnacles of the Temple, shew us the Riches and Honour, and Pleasure of the World, and say, *all this will I give you, if You will fall down and worship Me*. But as it generally happens, that the greatest Promisers are the least Performers ; so in this particular Case, those credulous Wretches will certainly find themselves most miserably deluded, who listen to the Voice of the Tempter, or hope to reap any real Enjoyment from that fair imaginary Shew, that the Deceitfulness of Sin represents to 'em. If we should reckon up the large Catalogue of all the different Vices of Mankind, how empty and vain, nay, how troublesome and uneasy the Pursuit, even of those that seem the most delightful and charming, would appear ? Those I say, that *seem* the most Delightful and Charming. For with what Pain and Anxiety do we see some Men labour after sinful Pleasure ? Pleasure, and the unconfin'd Delights of a loose, dissolute, and roving Life, is all they pretend to, and value themselves upon:

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upon : and the wretched Mistake is, that they often think themselves Masters of it, when in earnest they are running a more laborious Course, and undergo often more Hardships, in this wild Chale of Folly and Sin, than ever the strictest Rules of Morality or Religion, would have requir'd at their hands. To live in a perpetual Hurry and Distraction, to be laying in continual Supplies for fresh Diseases, to pride themselves in some wild Humour, or invent some unaccountable Frolick, regarding neither the Sacredness of Persons, Places or Things ; to be in at every Fray and midnight Scuffle, and to be often deservedly as ill-us'd as they insolently intended to have used Others ; these are accounted some of their Pieces of Gallantry ; and the more extravagant the Vice, the more accomplish'd the Gentleman. It were vain to go to prove, how little Satisfaction these unhappy Creatures reap from their lewd Folly, when for half the Misery and Pain some of them endure in the Road to Destruction, had they suffer'd it in the Cause of Virtue or Religion, they might have been more than *Canoniz'd*, they might have *Been* Saints. What loud Accusations should we hear, from these very Men, against the Justice of the Divine Providence, did Men suffer half so much by Piety and Virtue, as they do in the Service of their Lusts?

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Lusts? But these are but one Sect of the Men of Pleasure, that have found out an odd Way of enjoying it peculiar to themselves.

Others there are, that pretend to be more reasonable in their Vices, that have some care to escape downright Infamy, and have some regard to their Fortunes, their Bodies, and their Health; that are cautious enough in the Enjoyment of their Sensual Delights, to Sin so to Day, as they may Sin to Morrow; and so carefully manage their Vices, that the excess of One may not make 'em Unfit for Another. Mirth and gay Company and Wit and Wine and all the fresh Varieties of Luxury and Lust, make their Days fly delightfully away, and teach 'em to laugh at, and despise those Phlegmatick and heavy Slaves, as they are pleas'd to term them, that live by any Rule but Pleasure. These sure, if any, have some Fruit in Sin; These sure are the Men, who, whatever the End of their Journey be, yet travel it on very joyfully, and are in a most pleasant Road. But how wretchedly may we be deceiv'd in the outward Shew of things? If the Guilt, that inseparably sticks to these sensual Riotings, could possibly be abstracted from them, yet how little of true Satisfaction there is to be found in all this Noise and Appearance of Delight and Happiness, let the Wise Man convince

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convince us, who *had made Trial of all the different Ways of Pleasure, to see what was Good for the Sons of Men*; who, as he himself tells us, *had given himself to Wine, and Mirth, and Laughter, and whatsoever his Eyes desir'd, kept it not from them, nor withheld his Heart from any Joy*; who wanted neither Riches to buy, nor Power to command, nor Wit to invent, nor Vigour to pursue, nor Appetite to relish new Enjoyments, nor Wisdom at last to give a true Judgment of the Real Value of them all. And he has given in One Word his final Determination, that they are all *Vanity*. And, as he himself asks the question, *what can the Man do that comes after the King?* after This King, certainly not so much as immediately follows in the answer, *Even that which was done before*. But alas! all the Pleasures of Sin are not only *Vanity*, but *Vexation of Spirit* too; and this those very gay Humour'd Men, even in the height of all their Jollity, if they durst confess it, must needs often feel and experience. In the very Heat and Extravagance of Mirth, as *Lucretius* observes, *surgit amari aliquid*, some bitter intruding Thought of Death, or Eternity, will be pressing for Admittance; and it is very difficult so quite to have stifled and overcome Conscience, as not to be forc'd to hear of her Importunities, even at times when Men may think her a little unreasonable.

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seasonable: This, tho' disguis'd well enough and carry'd off in Company, yet still stings within, and even *in the midst of Laughter the Heart is Sorrowful*. For we should be very grossly mistaken, if we should conclude, that all those that seem to us so Sprightly and Free, so full of Mirth and unacquainted with Care, are the most Happy Men, and Easy within themselves. Nay, it often happens, which is the greatest Misfortune can befall a Man, that all this extraordinary Jollity, and reputed good Humour, is but only the last Refuge from the Unquietness of those Thoughts, that they are so afraid to meet and converse with at Home in their own Bosom. And if one of these Men would but venture to grow once cool and consider, if he would but dare to come to himself, he would then own, how weary he has often been of that which he was forc'd to call Pleasure, because forc'd to repeat it in his own defence; what wretched Shifts he has been put to, to invent new Devices for spending the Time, when all the Old ones have been worn out, and lost their relish; how soon the new Pleasure cloy'd, and the old was taken up again; and in what a giddy Circle he has been driven round, and hurry'd blindfold by those Tyrannous Vices, that us'd him as Ill, as the *Philistines* did *Samson*, when they put out his Eyes and
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made him Grind. Then he would ascribe all, that in his long fit of Debauchery he mistook in earnest for Pleasure, to his Heat and Phrenzy, not his Judgment; and be convinc'd, that a mad Man may be as much pleas'd with his Disease, as the most Voluptuous Epicure with his Sensual Delights; which are as really Diseases, tho' of another Name, but more destructive Nature.

If therefore these Sins, that gratify the Sense, that pretend & promise so much Satisfaction, and are embrac'd by the generality of Mankind with so much Eagerness and Affection, prove so void of all true Joy; nay more, so full of Trouble and Disquiet; if the choicest and most sweet of them satiate and clog in the very enjoyment, and convince us that the chiefest pleasure of 'em was more in the Expectation and Desire than in the Possession; if these acquit themselves so ill of their promis'd Delight, what is to be expected from those Sins of a more malicious and unquiet Nature? from Envy and Revenge, from Hatred and Anger and all those violent Distracters of the Mind, that are so far from having any shew of Pleasure or Satisfaction in them, that as they come nearest to the Nature of the Devil and Wicked Spirits, so, like them, they are their own Tormenters too? How troublesome to itself, as well as to all others, is Pride?

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Pride? How restless Ambition? how impatient to obtain that Honour, which obtain'd makes it still more uneasy than before? and how painful and laborious is Covetousness, to heap together wherewithal to Starve? To commit any of these, one would think there should not be so much as a pretence to any Charm or Enticement; and in truth how strong and prevalent soever their Temptations may be, whatever unaccountable Pleasure, whatever secret Fruit, they, who are miserably engag'd in the guilt of them, may at that present enjoy; yet whenever they come seriously to consider, and cast up their Accounts, they will be amaz'd with wonder, how they could have been so deluded; and will have reason to expostulate with themselves, *What fruit had We, even then, in those things, whereof we are now asham'd?*

Which brings me to my 2^d Proposition,

II. That Sin, let it afford what Fruit or Delight soever, is in its own Nature Shameful and Base.

1st, In that it defaces in us the Image of God, in which we were created, and for the sake of which alone we were invested with Power and Dominion over the rest of the Creation; which alone ennobled us

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and

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and set us above the rank of all other Beings upon Earth. And what a Dishonourable Downfall was it, what Horror and Confusion was miserable Man overwhelm'd with; when from being the sole Lord of this Glorious Universe, which God had so exquisitely Fram'd for him, and with so much Divine delight survey'd and approv'd; for the sake of one only Sin he became the vilest Member of it; and instead of his being the purest and best Creature in the new made World, there was on a suddain Nothing in the whole Creation, except only Man, but was *Very Good*? what could discover more the Degenerous and Debasing Nature of Sin, by which that *Man, whom God had made but little lower than the Angels, and had crown'd him with Glory and Honour*, was in a Moment degraded from all this Excellence, and made *worse than the Beasts that perish*. And as the Natural, the Immediate and Necessary Connection between Sin and Shame was visible in the *Sinning of the first Adam*, that *One Man*, by whom *Sin came into the World*; so was it also in the *Suffering of the second Adam*, who for *Us was made Sin*. It was therefore because he bore the *Iniquities of Us all*, that *He was to be Despised and Rejected of Men*. For this it was, that it was written of the *Son of Man*, that he must not only *Suffer many things*, but be set at nought also. And
among

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among the Uses of the Cross of Christ, one, chiefly meant, was, by the Ignominy of that most accursed Infamous Punishment, the Punishment of meanest Slaves, and basest Criminals, to represent the Vileness of Iniquity, to which Shame and Confusion were so due, that there were to be Contumelies, as well as Agonies, in the Death that was to expiate it. It seem'd not sufficient, that the Blood of God should be shed for it, but that Blood too must be stain'd with the Imputation of a Malefactor. Christ, after having seen a Common Robber prefer'd before him, was to suffer the insulting Scorns and Vilifying of his Crucifiers, his Honour must be sacrific'd as well as his Life; such infinite Debasement and Contempt being an Essential Ingredient in these Wages of Sin, in the Death of our Lord, which was to atone for the Iniquities of Mankind.

2^{dly}, The Dishonour and Baseness of Sin appears, in that it brings us into the most wretched Estate of Servitude and Bondage. This is a Subject that even the Wiser Heathens, the Ancient Philosophers, especially the *Stoicks*, and many of the Poets, with great force of Reason and Sharpness of Wit frequently, and for Men that had no other than the common Light of Nature, nobly and Divinely Illustrate. But I the rather choose to insist upon it, because the Apostle

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here, in this very Chapter of my Text, inculcates it so often ; *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of Sin unto Death, or Obedience unto Righteousness ? But God be thanked, ye were the Servants of Sin, but ye have Obey'd, &c.* and in several other places. Now what so abject a condition as Slavery ? and what Slavery so mean as that of Sin ? and it is yet the more base, because it is in our own power to be free. For Sin Lords over us, not so much by its own Strength as by Our Cowardice, by our want of Courage to cast of its Yoke ; or what is worse, by our baseness of Spirit, that prefers the Life of Bondage to Liberty. A Man, without Disgrace or loss of Honour, may be overcome and made Captive by a more powerful Enemy ; and if he have made a gallant Defence, he may Bleed, but he need not blush ; he may be in Chains, but his Mind be free. But the Slavery of every one that is Captive in this Spiritual War, is truly dishonourable and without excuse. To yield to such an Enemy as we are assur'd by Truth itself, if we resist will fly from Us ; an Enemy against whom we have taken a Military Oath in Our Baptism, and lifted ourselves to fight Manfully against, under *Christ's* Banners ; an Enemy, that if we had dy'd even in our Infancy

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Infancy we had overcome; is not only beneath the Dignity of our high Calling as we are Christians, but below any Man of Reputation or Honour.

3dly, It is manifest how natural a Vileness there is in Sin by this, that the most profligate Wretches are so conscious of it, that tho' they fear not to do Ill, they fear the Shame of it; and tho' free from Conscience, are Slaves to Reputation. They *love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their deeds are Evil.* For tho' some indeed have the impudence to boast of their Wickednesses, and act them in open day, debauch'd by the degeneracy of an Age, that has made some Sins not only in fashion, but in repute; yet they are but a very small number, in comparison of the innumerable company of the close, and demure, and silent Sinners, who, as fond as they are of their Vices, know that the keeping of them to themselves is the only way of keeping their Credit too. By which plainly they confess, that they ought to be ashamed to commit those things, which whenever the World finds out, they can't help being ashamed that they have committed.

But 4ly, The detestable Vileness of Sin does not so much appear by the Shame that it produces in those sly Sinners, which is rather to be styl'd Cunning or Hypocrisy;

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as it does in that sort of Shame, with which these Romans, to whom the Apostle writes, were affected; when after their Conversion, all the Abominations of their former unregenerate State, all the Filthiness of their Conversation, and the Baseness of their Slavery, was laid open before their Eyes. The Shame of the Converted is a generous Shame, not regarding the Opinion of other Men, not so much concern'd that there is *no Fruit in these things*, or that the *End of them is Death*; as arising from the Sense of the very Nature and Essence of the things themselves. With what Confusion of Face must they needs be surpriz'd, when they first come to have a true Sight of the real Ugliness and Deformity of those Monsters they so long foster'd in their Breasts? This is a Shame, by all devoutly to be wish'd for; this is to be cherish'd, and whenever it happily seizes us after the Commission of any Sin, not to be turn'd away or put off; but entertain'd till it has made us entirely vile and despicable in our own Eyes, and laid us in the Dust, and debas'd us so low, that God out of his tender Pity may think us fit to be restor'd again, and lift us up. This is a Shame not to be asham'd of, and works a *Repentance not to be Repented of*. And indeed there can be no greater Security of a Repentance being sincere and true, than

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than its having been produc'd by this Shame. Nor is it only most secure to us, but most pleasing to God ; for tho' all the Methods, that God uses to bring us to Repentance, are of excellent use and agreeable to his Divine Wisdom ; and a true Repentance, by any of those Means wrought, is accepted by him ; yet certainly that which springs from the Sense of his Goodness being abus'd, and the Foulness of our Guilt, and the Shame of our Ingratitude, must be more acceptable, than that which is extorted by the servile Principle of Fear. And that Man has certainly a Temper fram'd by Nature for Virtue and Goodness, whom the sense of an ill or unworthy Action, into which he has unfortunately fall'n, so overwhelms with Shame, that he would willingly exchange the Punishment he feels within from That, for any outward Torment that can be inflicted or invented.

On the contrary, there can be no greater Sign of an hardned and settled Impenitency, nor any greater Aggravation of Guilt, than want of Shame. This is that of which God by his Prophet with so much Indignation complains, *Thou hadst a Whore's Forehead, thou refusedst to be asham'd*; and in a more peculiar manner threatens with Destruction, *Jer. 8. 12. Were they asham'd, when they had committed abomination ? Nay, they were not at all asham'd,*

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neither could they blush : therefore shall they fall among them that fall, in the time of their Visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. But, if not to Blush at our Wickedness be so heinous an Abomination, and deserves so much Vengeance, what must be their Portion, who not only disdain to blush at their Impieties, but glory in 'em? That set up for Patrons of Vice, and are proud to draw over Profelytes to Iniquity; that would have all their own desperate Wickednesses pass for Gallantry of Spirit, and good Breeding; and all the contrary Virtues of Others for want of Mettle or Affectation of Singularity? These are next of kin to the evil Spirits themselves, that would draw all they could into the same Condemnation; and in an Age, wherein Custom sways almost as much as Reason, no wonder if some deluded People, who really deserve Pity, taking these for the choicest Spirits of the Time, choose rather to forfeit their Conscience, than be out of the Mode; and it is too plain, that many, otherwise well enough dispos'd Minds, have too much comply'd with the reigning Vices and Follies of the Times, meerly out of Shame of being thought singular, and Men of a Humour by themselves. But besides, the unaccountable Absurdity of this Plea of Singularity, there is a further Consideration behind,

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behind, of an Infinitely higher Concern, of Infinitely greater Weight and Moment, enough to make Men tremble at their Danger, as well as blush at their Folly. For if they would but seriously lay to heart what our Saviour pronounces in the 8th Chapter of St. Mark, and the last Verse. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels;* they would certainly be convinc'd, that it is of as dangerous Consequence for them, to be ashamed of their Glory, as it is for the Others, to Glory in their Shame.

I come now, in the last Place, to the Third Proposition in my Text; That tho' Sin yielded never so much Fruit and Satisfaction, or were never so much in Esteem or Repute, yet the end of those things is Death. *As Righteousness tendeth to Life; so He that pursueth Evil, pursueth it to his Own Death.* Prov. 11. 19. As Religion and Virtue tend directly to the Preservation of the Health of the Body, as well as the Soul; so Sin and Vice are as constant Enemies to both, and as successful in hastning on Temporal, as they are sure in procuring at last Eternal Death. Inasmuch, that in the Natural course of things, from the unavoidable dependance
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that Effects have upon their Causes, it is more than probable, that tho' God had not pronounc'd, that *in the Day that Adam sinn'd he should surely dye*; yet Sin without this *Positive and Express* Curse of God upon it, by its Own Efficiency, would have brought Mortality into the World; and not only the Wages, but the very Work of Sin, would have been Death. But it is not of This, the First Death, but of the Second Death, even everlasting Death, that the Apostle here speaks. And when all the Other milder Arguments can take no place; when the Emptiness and Vanity, the Infamy, Baseness and Shameful Nature of Sin, can't withdraw us from it, when all the other different ways, which God uses to draw us to himself, by working upon our *Hope*, by all the Glorious Rewards he has promis'd, or upon our *Love and Gratitude*, by his Infinite *Goodness and Mercy*, and Loving *Kindness*, prove alike ineffectual; what is there left to awaken Wretches, so stupidly insensible, but to rouse up all their *Fears*, with the dismal denunciation of certain Destruction and eternal Death. Death Eternal, I say, for so the Antithesis, which the Apostle uses in the end of this Chapter, gives it to be understood. For he speaks of such a Death as is oppos'd to Eternal Life, and that must be Eternal Death. *The Wages, says he, of Sin is Death;*
but

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but the Gift of God is Eternal Life. And when the Work of Sin goes so diligently on, is it not high time to sound aloud in the Ears of all, that are so busy in that Service, what it is they are to expect for their Wages? and if so warn'd, they will still serve so hard a Master as Sin, that has not only, no other Recompence for its Slaves but Death, but will not, nay cannot, give them their choice, whether they will receive the Wages, which they have serv'd for, or no; who can pity Them, or of whom can they complain? Not of God certainly, without the greatest Blasphemy and Injustice imaginable; He is far from *desiring the Death of a Sinner*, nay, Death is none of his Creature, *God made not Death*, says the Wise Man, *He created Man to be Immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity; Nevertheless thro' the envy of the Devil came Death into the World, and they that do hold on his side do find it:* Wisd. 2. 23, 24. It is therefore great Impiety, to question the Justice of God, in eternally punishing Wicked Men; who, would they side with him, the Author of Life, are proffer'd and invited to everlasting Bliss; but if they choose to side with the Devil, who brought Death into the World, most deservedly receive their Portion with him. For is there not the choice offer'd? Is not Life and Death set before us, that we may stretch forth
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our Hand to which we will? And does not that Eternal weight of Glory, which God has promis'd those that serve him, as far at least, exceed all our Imperfect and Transitory Services, as Eternal Torments can our Temporal indeed, but Despightful and Malicious Sins? and is there not then as much Reason for the Punishing to Eternity the one, as Eternally Rewarding the other? nay, is there not *Infinitely more*? since even the very best of our weak Performances could not, without Infinite Mercy, be accepted; and the very least of our Sins *justly* deserves Damnation. Yet, even in the very Declaration of Death to Sinners, does God's Mercy display itself equal to his Justice; neither was Hell only made for their sakes, who were to suffer in it, but for their's also, who were to be warned and saved by it; and it is owing to Eternal Punishments, that many Saints receive Eternal Rewards. So that could God dispense with, or remit those Eternal Torments, which by Holy Scripture we are assur'd he never will, and therefore ought not, from his Almighty Power, to argue against his Eternal Truth; yet would it not agree, even with his Mercy it self, so to do. Since, then he would take away one of the strongest Motives to our Conversion and Obedience; when, God knows, This, with all the rest together, by their Effects
seem

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seem to be but too few. Sure I am, that whoever goes about to perswade Men, that God will, or may relax those everlasting Pains, with which he has threatned Sin, goes beyond his Commission; beyond it, did I say? nay, contrary to it, Contrary to their Commission, whose Duty it is, *Knowing the Terrors of the Lord, to perswade Men.* We must Conclude therefore, that Holy is the Lord, and Just in all his Dealings towards the Children of Men; and let us Beseech him to give us Grace, perfectly to be asham'd of these fruitless Things, whose end is Death; that so, as the Apostle goes on in the Verse immediately following my Text, *being made free from Sin, and become Servants to God; we may have our Fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.*

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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PSAL. XIX. 7.

*The Law of the Lord is perfect,
 Converting the Soul: The Testi-
 mony of the Lord is Sure, making
 Wise the Simple.*

THIS Psalm is a noble Poem, compos'd by Holy *David*, in Contemplation of the two different Ways, by which God had been pleas'd to display Himself to Mankind. The First, of which he treats in the six first Verses, is that general Manifestation of Himself; which shines out in so bright and glorious a manner, in the Beauty and Order and Constancy of the Heavenly Bodies, the most noble and conspicuous Part of the Visible Creation.

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Creation. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work* (v. 1.) the Firmament, spread forth as a fair Volume, in which is written the infinite Wisdom and Power of its great Creator, in Characters legible to all Mankind, such as He, that can but look up, can't choose but read, and in a Language known and understood by all the different Nations upon the Face of the whole Earth. *There is neither Speech nor Language, but their Voices are heard among them. Their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words into the ends of the World* (v. 4.) Insomuch, that St. Paul justly reckons even the Heathen World inexcusable, if, in this great Book of Nature, they could not read the Divinity of its Author. *For the invisible things of Him from the Creation of the world are clearly seen, by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead; So that they are without Excuse,* Rom. i. 20.

The Second, which He begins to handle from the Verse of my Text, is that more particular Manifestation of Himself to his chosen People the *Jews*; to whom, in a more peculiar Manner, He reveal'd Himself, not only by his Works, common to all, but by his Word appropriated to them, giving them a Law written with his own Hand. A Law, which, with so much Divine Eloquence, the Royal Prophet, thro' this latter part of the Psalm,

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Psalm so highly and so justly extols, not without a further Prospect to that more clear Revelation, which in Fulness of time was to be made to the whole World, when He should come, who was to be a *Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of his people Israel.* For that *Law of the Lord*, which, both here and in many other places, particularly quite thro' that whole long, but most artificial and excellent Psalm, the 119th, Holy *David* with so much Devotion and Rapture, so much Zeal and Love, magnifies and adores under the several Synonymous Expressions of God's *Word, Judgments, Commandments, Statutes, Testimonies*, and the like, is not of that confin'd and narrow Signification, as to mean only the *Law of Moses*, or whatever other Divine Writings were in *David's* time extant, but is to be understood of the whole Reveal'd Word of God; the whole Body of Scriptures, taking in what should in after Ages be deliver'd to the Church, as well as what was already pen'd. And all those divine Elogies and Praises, which occur so often thro' the Book of *Psalms*, as they were Historically and Experimentally true of that part of Scripture, which the Faithful then enjoy'd; so were they also Prophetically Infallibly true of all the rest of it, which in God's fit Time was to be writ by the Inspiration of the

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same Spirit, by which those before *David*, and *David* himself wrote. Taking therefore, as we ought, the words *Law* and *Testimony* in this their just Latitude and full Sense, we may, from these Words of my Text, observe two very remarkable and distinguishing Excellencies of the Holy Scripture; namely, their *Perfection*, and *Perspicuity*; Their *Sufficiency to Salvation*, and *Plainness to be Understood*. Both which the Church of *Rome*, in order to erect a Spiritual Tyranny of her Own over Men's Consciences, would Sacrilegiously Rob them of; and to make it seem necessary, that she should have rightly that Power, which she most falsely usurps, of adding to them *What* she pleases, and interpreting *what is in them* *how* she pleases, as boldly as unjustly charges the Word of God of being both Imperfect and Obscure. But what says the Psalmist, who we may safely presume understood this Holy Word? He concludes the quite contrary in my Text; *The Law of the Lord is perfect, Converting the Soul: The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making Wise the Simple*. In which two Members are most evidently contain'd these two Propositions;

1st, That Holy Scripture, in all things necessary to Salvation, is so compleat that it
needs

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needs no Addition, for *The Law of the Lord is Perfect* ; and,

2dly, Is so Evident, that it needs no Infallible Judge for its Interpretation, for *it makes Wise the Simple*.

Both which I shall endeavour to make out, both from Scripture and Reason; and that briefly and didactically; entering as little into Controversy as I well can.

3dly, I shall then shew, how he ought to be qualify'd, that would read the Scripture with Profit; imply'd in this Word of the Text, *the Simple*.

1st, Then, We affirm, That the Holy Scriptures contain in them all things necessary to be Believ'd or Practis'd, in order to the obtaining of Everlasting Salvation.

I. This Proposition might be undeniably prov'd by Induction, that is, by a bare recital and enumeration of all the Articles of Christian Faith, and all the Rules of Christian Obedience; and by shewing where each, and every of them is particularly and expressly taught and commanded in several places of Holy Writ; but this would amount to no less than a whole Body of Divinity,

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and being too large an Undertaking for this Time and Place, I shall wave it at present, leaving it to every Man's own Observation and Experience, to satisfy Himself of the Truth of it; and challenging the Adversaries of the Truth of it, to produce One single Point absolutely necessary to Salvation, relating either to Belief or Practice, which is not somewhere or other clearly set down and deliver'd to us in Scripture.

That the Law of *Moses* was, as the Psalmist here styles it, a *Perfect* Law; that is, that it contain'd all things that were necessary for God's People, the *Jews*, to Believe and to do, in order to obtaining the Promises of it, is plain from the frequent and pressing Admonitions of *Moses* to the Children of *Israel* to the most Religious, Strict, and Inviolable Observation of it; And that they might know that That was the *entire* Will of God, and to which Only he expected their Exact Obedience; how often through the whole Book of *Deuteronomy* does he repeat? *These are the Testimonies and the Statutes and the Judgments, and Hear O Israel, the Statutes and the Judgments which I speak in your Ears this Day: Now these are the Commandments, These and none else, the Statutes and the Judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that thou*

might'st

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might'st fear the Lord to keep ALL HIS STATUTES. And that none might doubt, but that *All his Statutes* were herein contain'd, that nothing more was to be expected to make up the Perfection of the Law, or supply any imaginable defect in it; what a peremptory Caution does he give? *Ye shall not Add unto the Word that I command, neither shall ye Diminish ought from it,* Deut. 4. 2. and again, repeating the same Prohibition, *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it, thou shalt not Add thereto, nor Diminish from it.* Chap. 12. 32. Since therefore no Additions might be made to it, it must be concluded to have been already Perfect: Perfect, both as a full Direction of Life and Manners, and as a compleat Sum of all they were to Believe and expect. To *these* Scriptures therefore it was that our Saviour, while he was upon Earth, upon all occasions appeal'd, from These he convinc'd the Jews of their Unbelief, These he commanded all to Search, *Search the Scriptures, for in Them Ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.* John 5. 39. It was to These Scriptures, that Father Abraham referr'd the Brethren of the Rich Glutton, as to a sure guide, to direct 'em to the perfect Bliss, which he himself enjoy'd, and to secure them from that place of Torment,

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where their Brother lay. *They have Moses and the Prophets let them hear Them.* If these were not sufficient for their Conversion, no other means would be available. *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho' One rose from the Dead.* It was to these Scriptures, as to a sufficient Rule, exclusive of all Others, the Prophet *Isaiah* commands to have recourse in all Cases, for Infallible Counsel and Direction, *To the Law and to the Testimony.* *Isai. 8. 20.*

Now if in the First Covenant, and in the Old Law, there was such Perfection, can we imagine, that in the more full discovery which God has made of his Will, when *in these last Days he has spoke to us by his Son,* there should be any thing wanting; any thing necessary to Everlasting Life omitted, any defect left to be made up by Human Additions and Devices? No certainly, but as our Saviour fully instructed his Apostles in every particular that was necessary to be Known, Believ'd, Hop'd, or Practis'd, in order to the Salvation of his Church, as he himself Testifies speaking to the Father, *I have manifested thy Name unto the Men which thou gavest me out of the World, I have given unto Them the Words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely, that I have come out from thee.* *John 17. 6, 8.* and speaking to those Apostles themselves,

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selves, *All things that I have heard from my Father I have made known unto You*, John 15. 15. So they as faithfully deliver'd what they had been taught by their Great Master, keeping nothing back that was necessary, nor adding any thing of their own; but dispensing entirely, as faithful Stewards, all that Truth, and nothing but that Truth, which they had receiv'd from Christ. And This they did, both by their Preaching to those, with whom they were *here* conversant upon Earth; and also by Writing to all succeeding Ages of the Faithful. For since the extraordinary Gifts, with which they were endu'd from above, were to cease and dye with them, it was necessary that they should leave behind them a full and compleat Summary of all the Doctrine they had receiv'd, *and in Their Writings preach to the end of the World, and being Dead yet speak.* To this End they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost, to Compose those Books which make up the Canon of the New Testament: and that nothing material might, thro' Human frailty, out of Ignorance or Forgetfulness, Negligence or Inadvertency, be omitted, Our Saviour gives 'em this Promise, *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you All things, and bring All things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto You.*

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John 14. 26. and again, John 16. 13. When the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide You into all Truth. Now this Promise our Saviour did most assuredly make good, and these Holy Men, Writing by this Divine Assistance, to this very end and purpose, to reveal the whole Mind of God; how can it be suppos'd, without Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, that they fell short of what by His Inspiration they undertook; that they left a lame and imperfect Rule of Faith and Manners, to be supply'd and patch'd up with Human, Uncertain, Unwritten Traditions? If all the Gospel of Christ, the whole Covenant between God and Man, were not written, God would have certainly ordered to whom we should have recourse for that part of it, which was not written; which seeing he has not done, it is reasonable to conclude, that he has left no part of it Unwritten. Why does every One of the Four Evangelists entitle His Book the Gospel, if any necessary or Essential Part of the Gospel were left out of it? Did the Holy Penmen Omit any thing out of Ignorance, as not knowing it to be necessary? Or did they, knowing it to be so, wilfully and enviously detain it from us? Or did they negligently or carelessly content themselves with doing so great a Work, as they had taken in hand, by halves?

Did

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Did they Purposely or Unwittingly, by *Design* or by *Accident*, drop and spill, by the way, part of their Commission? If none of these things can be objected against them, without manifestly Blaspheming, as I said before, the Holy Ghost, by whose Motion and Assistance they Wrote; it must be concluded, that in their Writings is fully comprehended all, and every thing Necessary to Salvation. *These things*, says St. John of his own Gospel, *are written that ye might Believe, that Jesus is the Christ; and that Believing, ye might have Life through His Name.* And since all Scripture is given by Inspiration from God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be Perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good Works; St. Paul says no more than the undoubted Truth, when he tells Timothy, that the Scriptures are able to make him Wise to Salvation. 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16, 17.

The Holy Scripture being thus abundantly Sufficient, We are *from* them alone to receive all Rules of Life, and *by* them alone to examine all Points of Doctrine. Neither can Any thing whatsoever, which is not expressly in these Books contain'd, or by direct Consequence naturally from them deduc'd, be impos'd by any Man, or Company of Men, as an Article of Faith, or Law of Manners,

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Manners, without the greatest, most unwarrantable, and most intolerable Usurpation over the Consciences of their Fellow-Christians; as well as the highest Indignity to, and Derogation from, the Gospel of Christ. What therefore must be said of that Church, that has not only apparently done so, but that in a General Council, as they are pleas'd to call it, has determin'd Unwritten Traditions to be of equal Authority, and to be receiv'd with like Veneration as the Written Word of God? Is not that of Solomon worth their Consideration? *Add thou not unto His Words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a Liar; thy Forgeries and Impostures being laid open and expos'd to all the World. Should not that Curse of the Apostle affright their Souls? (Gal. 1. 8.) Tho' We, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preach'd unto you, let him be Accursed. Or ought not that dreadful Denunciation, with which St. John concludes his Revelation, terrify 'em from this sacrilegious Boldness? If Any Man shall add unto the Words of this Book, God shall add unto him the Plagues that are written in this Book, (Rev. 22. 18.)*

II. I come now to the other Character of Holy Scripture; namely its Clearness and Perspicuity, plainly taught in my Text, and
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visible in this, that it *Makes Wise the Simple.*

And indeed to what purpose had it been, that in these Holy Books all things necessary, both to Faith and Obedience, were contain'd, if they were so Obscure to Us, that we could be never the Wiser for them? How absurdly as well as impiously, must they think of that Holy Spirit, that dictated these Writings for the Use of the Church in all Ages, who accuse them of being Dark, and not to be Understood? What an Imputation of Folly would it be in a Law-giver, to pen his Laws in such a Phrase and Style, as his People could not understand? and what horrible Iniquity to punish them, for not acting according to a Command, which they were not able to know the Meaning and Purpose of? Far be it from Us, to conceive such an Unworthy Opinion of God Himself, and his Holy Word. No; the Word of God, in all things necessary, is plain and open to the meanest Capacity. Hear what *Moses* says of his Law, (and *St. Paul* applies the very same words to his Gospel, the word of Faith, which he preach'd, *Rom. 10. 6.*) *This Commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou should'st say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it be-*
yond

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yond the Sea, that thou should'st say, Who shall go over the Sea, for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? But the Word is very Nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, that thou may'st do it. (Deut. 30. 11-14.) Again, *These words that I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deut. 6. 6, &c.)* So plain did he think his Sense deliver'd in the Law, that it was to be their daily and familiar Discourse, at home and abroad, in all places, in all postures, and upon all occasions; So plain, that instead of running in search of any Infallible Expositor, every Father might instruct his Son in it, and every Mother her Daughter. The same Clearness did Holy *David* acknowledge, when he says in the very next Verse to that of my Text, *The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes: and elsewhere, Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Path; and his Son Solomon agrees exactly with his Father, The Commandment is a Lamp and the Law is Light, (Prov. 6. 23.)*

In like manner we find St. *John* in many places styling, sometimes our Saviour himself, and sometimes his Gospel, *Light, a Light that shin'd in Darkness, the true Light that lightens*

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lightens every man that comes into the World, the Light of the World, and the Light of Life. And St. Paul, speaking of the Gospel, says, *That the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men,* has been manifest to all Men. For who is there that is not capable of a sufficient Understanding of the Story, the Precepts, the Prohibitions, the Promises, and Threatnings of the Gospel? Who, that will but read it, is not able to understand the Meaning of that heavenly Sermon of our Saviour's upon the Mount, deliver'd with Equal Plainness and Power to the Capacity of the Weakest, as well as the Conviction of the Wisest? Both the Law and the Gospel were writ for all Men, that All might come to the Knowledge of the Truth. And as God commanded, not only the Priests and the Levites, but the whole People, to read and be perpetually conversant in the Law; So has Christ, by his Apostles, deliver'd his Gospel, and commanded it to be read, not by the Learned only, or the Clergy, but by the whole Christian Church, by all Ranks and Conditions of Men, from the highest to the lowest in Fortune, or Understanding. Further, Every Man to whom the Writings of the Gospel have come, is oblig'd, under Pain of everlasting Damnation, both to believe its Doctrines, and obey
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its Commands; and St. Paul tells us, That in the great Day, God shall judge the secrets of Men's hearts by Christ Jesus, according to his Gospel. Now, what is the direct and natural Conclusion from this, but that this Covenant between God and Man, which is so Universal, as equally to concern all Mankind, the Wise and the Unwise, the Simple and the Learned, so Obligatory, that without the fulfilling the Conditions of it, No One can be sav'd; so adequate a Measure of the whole Duty of a Christian, that it shall be the Standard, by which Christ will judge the World, must bear a Sense most perspicuous and plain to all Persons it concerns, that is, the Whole World, in those Parts of it by which they are to be judg'd, that is, all that are Fundamental and absolutely Necessary to Salvation? Unless we would charge the Judge of all the World with the highest Injustice, in exacting Belief and Obedience of those, who had no Means of knowing what they were either to believe or obey; and of the most Barbarous Cruelty, in punishing his Creatures to all Eternity, for not finding that Plain, which he himself had purposely left Obscure.

This I think may be sufficient, both from the Testimony of Scripture, and from the Nature and Reason of the thing it self, to evince the Perspicuity of Holy Writ in all
Necessary

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Necessary Points. In all Necessary Points I say, which I desire may all along this whole Discourse be observ'd and remembered. For, that there are several Difficulties, not only in St. *Paul's* Epistles, in which the Romanists object to us from St. *Peter*, *Some things are hard to be Understood*; but in many other Places of both Old and New Testament, none is so blind or partial, as not to grant. But because *some* are Obscure, does it thence follow that *all* are so? Because things, that are not Necessary, are not always and in every place so clear, that the most ordinary capacity may see thro' them; can it be concluded from hence, that *what-ever* is absolutely necessary to every Man's Soul's health is equally Dark? This were Injurious to God, Contradictory to Scripture, Disagreeing to Reason, and which is the most impudent of all Oppositions, against Experience too.

To sum up this Head therefore, It must be allow'd, that as in Scripture there is contain'd every thing, that of Necessity a Christian Man ought to Believe or Practice, in Terms most expressive and Evident to the Simple and Unlearn'd; so there are also in it, Depths and hidden Treasures of Knowledge, which may exercise all the Industry and Skill and Parts, of the most Learned and Wise, and surpass them too. But then
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this is our comfort, that Where the Scripture is not plain, There, if We, using honest diligence to find the Truth, do yet miss of it, and fall into Error, there is no danger in it. Neither therefore need we any living infallible Judge, or decider of Controversies; For Those places that contain things necessary, and wherein Errors are dangerous, need no such Interpreter, because they are plain; And those that are Obscure *need none*, because containing things not necessary, Error in them is not dangerous. The Scripture itself, by its own Light, is able to end all Controversies necessary to be ended; and for others that are not so, they will end when the World ends, and that will be time enough. In the mean-while, let us be thankful to God, for that Knowledge of his Will which he has been pleas'd to favour us with; and having done Our Duty, according to so much of it as he has *plainly* taught, and which therefore he may justly claim of us, and we are indispensably bound to perform; be content to wait his good Pleasure for the rest, and leave those things, which he has more obscurely deliver'd, to his All-wise disposal; Remembring that of *Moses*, Deut. 29. 29. *The Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are reveal'd, belong unto Us and to our Children for Ever, that we may do all the Words of his Law.*

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I have thus, with what brevity I could, endeavour'd to assert the Scriptures being an Absolute Rule, by shewing it to be qualify'd for such, in both its Capacities; so that by Reason of its Fullness and Perfection, there is no need of Human Tradition; nor by reason of its Clearness and Perspicuity, of any infallible Judge upon Earth.

III. But because the Scriptures, as plain as they are in themselves, may thro' our default prove obscure, and thro' our blindness of Heart be to Us dark; I shall now proceed to the Qualifications requisite to the Reading of 'em with Profit and Understanding, which I shall comprehend under a few Heads, and

The First I shall name is Humility. Truth never takes Root so kindly, never finds so agreeable a Soil, as in an Humble Heart. He that is conscious of his Own Natural Blindness, and having a just Sense of his Infirmities, approaches reverently these Holy Oracles with the perfect and entire Submission of a Disciple, whose business is to Learn, and not to Judge or Controul; void of all vain Conceit of his Own Wisdom, or Natural Reason, or acquir'd Abilities, is of all Others fittest to be admitted into the School

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of Christ, and shall experimentally find by his improvement in Spiritual Knowledge and Understanding, *That God giveth Grace to the Humble.* The same God, that *resisteth the Proud*, that so confounds the Wisdom of the World, that they who are puffed up with that conceit, *professing themselves to be Wise, become Fools.* It was Pride was the Reason why the Scribes and Pharisees, tho' otherwise of the best Skill in Scripture, were blinded in the most necessary and material Point of Salvation, tho' most plainly set down in Scripture. For what in the whole Law and the Prophets is so plainly set down as many of the Testimonies concerning the *Messias*, all visibly Centring in *Christ*? Yet *They were scatter'd in the proud Imaginations of their Heart*, and in their stead were set up *the Humble and Meek.* Illiterate and Simple, but lowly and Meek Spirited Men were rais'd up to be Infallible Teachers of the Gentiles. And is it not Pride that makes the Divinity of the same Christ, which those Pharisees oppos'd, be at this Day also deny'd by those great pretenders, who having set up their Own Natural Reason for the only Rule of their Belief, will allow nothing fit to be believ'd, or worthy to be known, which their piercing Faculties cannot Comprehend? Is not *Socinus* a deplorable Instance of what averfeness to Truth
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this Pride of Understanding may, by its Natural Efficiency, and God's just Judgment, bring a Man to ? when in express words he tells us, speaking of the Satisfaction of Christ, *As for me, if it were not only Once, but Oftentimes to be met with in Holy Scripture, yet would I not therefore believe it.* And is not Smalcus, his Disciple, just such another (*quæ wæcus quæ 300*) who tells us in as plain Words; *That He would not believe the Incarnation, tho' he should meet with it in express terms in the Bible.* God keep all of Us from such Blasphemies! which I should not so much as have nam'd were it not more seasonable than I could wish, when these and the like spread every Day among us, and diffuse themselves without Check or Controul. Let us therefore take the greater heed, and laying aside all Pride and Conceit of our own Wisdom, if We desire to Understand the Word of God, Relinquish up our Selves Entirely to the dictates and guidance of it. Entirely, I say, in Our Understanding as well as our Will; acknowledging ever God's equal and undoubted Right over both those Faculties; and that therefore, as we are ty'd to *Obey the Commandments of God*, tho' with Repugnancy to our Will; so we must own ourselves under an Equal Obligation to *believe the Word of God*, tho' with Reluctancy to our Understanding. Let us not

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in Reading Scripture argue Thus loosely and wildly, This seems contradictory to Reason, and therefore cannot be the Word of God; but rather most Conclusively Thus, This is the Word of God, and therefore cannot be against Reason. *Let us, as St. Paul advises, cast down all Imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ.*

2dly. A Second Qualification is a Sincere and Heartly Love of Truth, which whoever brings with him to the Study of Scripture, that great Store-house of it, cannot choose but find what he seeks. *I love them that love me, says Wisdom, and he that seeks me early shall find me.* He that has This Love in a Measure any way proportionable to that of David, who expresses so often his *Longing Desire to it, his Delight in it, his Preferring it* to the most precious things, *to thousands of Gold and Silver, and to the most sweet, to Honey and to the Honey-comb,* will use all Diligence, will think no Pains too great, nor leave any Means untry'd, to acquire it. He will omit no outward Helps and Assistances, he will labour to inform himself rightly of the Sense of the Primitive Church, express'd in ancient Creeds, Confessions, Councils, Writings of the Fathers; he will make use
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of those Lights, which in these later times God has rais'd up in his Church ; he will apply all his Stock of Reading, all his Skill in Arts and Sciences and Languages, all his Knowledge in Profane Authors, to the Study of this One Book, which he judges, of all that were ever writ, to be only worth the understanding. But if he have not these Advantages of Learning, he will be never the less diligent in studying the Holy Books themselves, carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, which is ever its own best Expositor, and bringing Light to the darker Places from those that are more clear. But further ; This Love of Truth does imply also a Love of nothing but Truth ; and he who comes thus prepar'd, has no Prejudices to bribe his Judgment, no preconceiv'd Opinions to gratify at the Expence of Truth, no Perswasion that he is not willing to lay down, upon the Conviction of the contrary. He studies not Scripture for Contention or Ostentation, to maintain a Cause, or hold an Argument, with a Design to wrest it to One side, or to bring it over to a Party which he has espous'd: But having One only Aim, which is to search after Truth diligently, and embrace it as heartily, when found, this is infallibly the Highway to it. We may be sure, that the *God of Truth* will not suffer such honest Endeavours to be in vain ; but

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will lead a devout Soul thus enclin'd, if not into all Truth, yet into as much of it as shall be sufficient for his Everlasting Happiness; and preserve him, if not from all Error, yet from all that shall be hurtful or dangerous to his Salvation.

3dly. A Third Qualification for the Reading of Scripture, so as to improve in the true and saving Knowledge of it, is an Uniform and Universal Obedience to all the Precepts contain'd in it.

Practice is certainly the best way to the Knowledge of any Doctrine; being actually exercis'd and daily conversant in the Duties of the Gospel, will give a Man a surer and more satisfactory Notion and Feeling of the Excellence and Wisdom of it, than the most elaborate Expositions and Commentaries of the most able Divines. He that hath that Principle of Obedience within, opens willingly and readily his Soul to all that he reads; for it speaks to his Heart, and every thing in the Gospel fits the Temper of his Mind. But besides this natural Tendency, there are thro' the whole Scripture many clear and Positive Promises of Heavenly Knowledge, and further Degrees also of the same Knowledge, and an Encrease of it to a due and sincere Practise of what we already know. *The Secrets of the Lord*

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Lord are with them that fear Him, says Holy David. *I have more Understanding than all my Teachers*, says the same Royal Prophet: but whence came all this divine Knowledge? It immediately follows, *because I keep thy Precepts*. But our Blessed Saviour's Promise is of all most exprefs and encouraging, John 7. 17. *If any Man will do His Will, he shall know of the Doctrine if it be of God*.

I shall conclude this Head with an Answer full of Wisdom and Piety, which a great and pious Cardinal of our own Nation gave, when being consulted, What Method of Study was likely to be most effectual towards the understanding of the difficult and obscure Passages in Saint Paul's Epistles, he gave this Advice: That the way likeliest to succeed, was to begin at the End of those Epistles, to study diligently and practise faithfully those Rules, which he there with so much Plainness lays down, relating to Christian Manners, a Holy Life, and Godly Conversation: and then, and not till then, to proceed to the former Part, where the doctrinal Points and Matters of Faith are more nicely and subtilly and exactly handled. Without doubt a Mind exercised in the *plain Precepts*, will of all other most easily discover the more *Obscure Truths* of Religion. Whereas on the contrary, They who neglect or despise the clear in-

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telligible Commands, whatever Study or Application else they may use, are deservedly shut out, as Unholy and Prophane, from the more hidden Venerable and Holy Mysteries of the Gospel.

The last Requisite, which I shall mention, is constant and earnest Prayer to Almighty God, that That Spirit of Truth, which first did dictate to those that writ, may be present also and assistant to us that read the Holy Scripture. This of all the other Qualifications is most necessary, for without this all the rest, and all our other Study and Endeavours will prove fruitless and vain. Prayer indeed without Study is Presumption, but Study without Prayer is Atheism. We find Holy *David*, who had made the *Word of God his Exercise Day and Night, who understood more of it than his Teachers, or the Aged*; yet continuing still in Prayer, and in sundry Places with *much importunity* and servour suing to God for further Light and Instruction in it. Let us therefore, in Imitation of that *Man after God's own Heart*, whatever Knowledge we have, ascribe all of it to the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and never cease to pray for greater Improvements and further Degrees of it; lest even that should be taken from us, which we have. Let us never take the
Bible

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Bible in our hands, never approach to consult those Oracles, without some of these devout Ejaculations of the Holy Psalmist in our Mouths or in our Hearts: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Teach me Thy Statutes, Open Thou mine Eyes, that I may see the wondrous Things of thy Law. Teach me, O Lord, the Way of thy Statutes; give me Understanding, and I shall keep thy Law. Teach me Good Judgment and Knowledge, for I have believ'd thy Commandments. Deal with thy Servant according to thy Mercy, and teach me thy Statutes. And for the present let us conclude with that excellent Prayer of our Church :*

Blessed Lord, who hast caus'd all Holy Scripture to be written for our Learning, Grant that We may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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SERMON VIII.

PROV. XII. 21.

There shall no Evil happen to the Just.

IT Had not been agreeable to the Infinite Goodness of God, when he had Created Man to be Immortal, and made him the Image of his own Eternity, as the Book of *Wisdom* speaks (*Wisd. 2. 23.*) if he had not made him also perfectly Happy, and the Image of his own Bliss and Felicity. He placed him therefore in Paradise, a Garden of Delight, resembling, as far as Earth was capable, his own Ever Blest Habitation in the Heavens. No evil could happen to *Just Adam*, for *Evil* yet had no being. The whole Creation made
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for his Use, as it was survey'd and approv'd of by the Allwise Architect of it, was in every part of it pronounc'd to be exceeding Good; there was, as the same Wise-man speaks, *no poyson of Destruction in it, no Kingdom of Death, no Evil upon the Earth.* (Wild. 1.14.) But the Condition, upon which both Immortality and Happiness were held, was Uprightness and Obedience; The State of Innocence it was that made the State of Felicity; and *Sin* and *Misery* were both at one unhappy Birth brought forth into the World together: and they ever since have been inseparable Companions. Whatever the outward appearance may be, the State of the Wicked, and of them Only, is truly Miserable; their very Prosperity is a Curse, and tends to their Destruction; whilst on the other hand, undisturb'd Peace, and uninterrupted Happiness are in the Dwellings of the Righteous; in whatever Circumstances they may seem to be to the eye of the World, yet Blessed certainly is their Condition; *all things work together for their good*, and even their Miseries are Blessings. 'Tis Guilt only that gives a Sting to Adversity, and sheds Poison into the Cup of Affliction; where Sin is not, there cannot possibly be any real Evil; Righteousness and Innocence are plac'd out of the Reach of That; *There shall, there Can, no Evil happen to the Just.* The

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The Truth of which Proposition, if taken in the strictness of its Terms, is Self Evident and Undeniable upon these two accounts ;

1st, Because there are None Just, i.e. There is no Man so Righteous on Earth, but has Sins enough to deserve more Evils, than in this World can happen to him.

2^{dly}, Because no Evil happens ; Every Evil that Men suffer, tho' to outward appearance never so Casual, being ordain'd by the Wise and Just appointment of God.

But tho' both these Assertions are unquestionably true, and will be also of good Use to explain, and of strong Force to prove what the Wisest of Men here intends ; yet the Words of the Text are not to be so strictly taken. Such a Proposition as they would then make, namely That no Evil ever happening, and there being No Man Just, tho' undoubtedly Certain, yet would be very impertinent ; tho' a very *great*, yet so very *plain* a Truth, that a Man not so Wise as *Solomon* would have thought it needless, if not ridiculous, to lay it down for a Maxim. By the Just therefore here, as in the usual Language of Scripture, we are to understand, not the Man of consummate unfinning Righteousness, for where will such be found?
Never

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Never was any Man such, Except One, who was God also, *Even the Man Christ Jesus*. But He is the Just Man in the Text, whose Uniform and Serious and Conscientious, tho' not *absolute* and *unerring* Obedience, is for the sake of that perfect Righteousness of Christ, approv'd by God; who knowing our Frame, and pitying our Weakness, is graciously pleas'd to accept of Hearty Endeavours, instead of Exact Performances, and Sincerity, instead of Perfection. It is indeed a Notorious and Deplorable Truth, that since that first Apostacy and Rebellion in Paradise, and the forfeiture of Original Righteousness by Our first Parents, there has never been any of their Offspring entirely Righteous; and that if the best of Us say, *That He has no Sin, he deceives Himself, and the Truth is not in Him*. It is nevertheless most Certain, that there have been in all Ages, many Persons who have so order'd their Lives, fearing God and having respect to his Laws, and endeavouring to keep a *Conscience void of offence, towards God and towards Men*, that in the main, notwithstanding many Human Infirmities and Failings, they may be justly accounted Good and Holy and Righteous Men. The Word of God himself stiles them so, and quite through the Holy Scriptures, tho' they teach us that in strictness all Men are Sinners,

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Sinners, there is yet a manifest Distinction made between the Righteous and the Ungodly, the Wicked and the Just, as particularly in this very Verse of the Text, *There shall no Evil happen to the Just, but the Wicked shall be fill'd with Mischief.*

By which Words, *There shall no Evil happen to the Just*, we are not to conceive, that there is any Privilege or Exemption promis'd to the Just from the Common Infirmities, and Weaknesses, the Usual Calamities and Disasters to which Our Being is Subject. *Man is Born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward*, Job 5. 7. nor without reason are those Tears, which he sheds at his first Entrance into this troublesome World, *Cui tantum in Vita restat / sufferre Malorum*; This is but a Suitable beginning of that Life, the whole Course of which, if not continually Exercis'd with Miseries and Sorrows, yet is always expos'd and lies Open to them. But the Scope and chief Intent of the Words are, that Religion and Virtue are the likeliest Preservative against the Miseries and Evils, that are so frequent in the World, and which are the undoubted Product and Offspring of Vice and sin; That Virtuous and Good Men are likeliest to pass thro' the Waves of this Tempestuous World, with least rolling and disturbance, that they meet with no Afflictions, but what by right using they may improve

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improve into Blessings, that generally Peace and Prosperity are the Attendants of Religion and Piety; *Godliness having the Promise of this Life, as well as of that which is to come.*

And this will appear, both from the Natural Tendency of Virtue, and the Exercise of those Duties that Religion enjoins ;

And from the promis'd Favour of God, and the Protection of his good Providence, ever Watching over them that Serve and Obey Him.

And first from the Natural tendency of all Virtuous Actions, and the Exercise of those Duties that our Holy Religion enjoins.

As it is most certain, that there had been no Evil in the Earth, if Man had not transgress'd the Law of his Maker, no Misery, if there had been no Sin ; so if now all the Laws of God were duly kept and universally obey'd, all the Miseries that afflict the Sons of Men would soon vanish, and a kind of Heaven upon Earth would commence. If, as We daily Pray, The Will of God were *done in Earth as it is in Heaven*, Man might live almost as happily here, as the Angels and Blessed Spirits there : possess even now of that Peace, and tasting those Joys, that differ rather in degree than kind, from those which are to be the Portion of his Everlasting Inheritance. For All the Calamities

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Infirmities and Mischiefs, all the Disorders and Troubles of this World, are visibly produc'd by the Lufts and Passions and Sins of Men; and the Evil that Man suffers, does as naturally spring up from the Evil that He does, as any noisom Weed or poisonous Plant, does from its proper Seed, when it is sown into the Ground. The only way therefore to attain Happiness, and get out of the reach of Misery, is to preserve our Virtue, and obey the Dictates of Religion, which even Naturally promote our Welfare here, in reference even to Temporal Enjoyments.

Of which I shall instance in but a few, but those the chiefest, and that briefly;

And first for Reputation and good Name, the tenderest Concern of a Generous Soul; Is there any Man generally in better Esteem and Credit, than the Man who has given the World Proof, that he scorns to do an unworthy or base Thing? Does any thing cast a greater Lustre than Virtue, and that even in the Eyes of those that have None themselves? Is not this confess'd even by Hypocrisy itself, which is an extorted Acknowledgment, a forced Tribute which Vice itself pays to Virtue?

Then 2^{dly}, If we consider Health, the very Salt of Life, that Seasons and gives a

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Relish to all the Other Enjoyments of it, What Truer Friend to that, what kinder Help to Nature, what greater Preservative of the true use of all our Faculties of Body, as well as Mind, than Virtue? But *As Righteousness tendeth to Life, so He that pursueth Evil, pursueth it to his Own Death*, in the Chapter immediately before This, and the 19th Verse. It is Vice and Luxury, Debauchery and Intemperance, that destroy and lay waste the most vigorous and flourishing Constitutions, that bring Trembling in the Joints, and Rotteness in the Bones. It is Envy and Malice that Prey upon the Heart, and Gnaw the very Vitals of the Wretch that is possess'd by them. It is Anger and Fury and Revenge that set the Soul upon the Rack, and make the Spirits boyl up, and run over, and bring the Body into those Agonies and Convulsions, that will destroy it in a short time, which sometimes One Fit alone has done. Whereas the Virtuous Man, whose Spirits move calmly, whose Passions Ebb and Flow in Obedience to Reason, preserves a constant and orderly Temper of Body, owing to the Evenness and Serenity of his Mind. In short, as Religion and Virtue tend directly to the Preservation of the Health of the Body as well as the Soul, so we shall find Sin and Vice as constant Enemies to both, and as successful in hast-
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ning on Temporal, as they are sure in procuring at last Eternal Death.

3dly, In Respect of the Ease and the Quietness of this Life, without which Life itself is an Insupportable Burthen, the Good and Virtuous Man has Infinitely the Advantage of the Wicked. As Trouble and Care and Anxiety were the Fruits of Sin, and a great and heavy part of the Curse that was laid upon Mankind for the First Transgression; so nothing but Innocence and Righteousness can redeem us from 'em, and restore and secure Quiet and Peace again to Us. The Virtuous Man, whose chief Study it is never to offend his good God, cheerfully trusts and depends on him for the Happiness of this Life and that which is to come: And by this means makes the good Things of this World, which he thankfully Possesses and Innocently Uses, yield the more solid Comfort and Pleasure; and Even the Evil things thereof, when they fall to his Lot, he bears not only with Content and Submission, but with Satisfaction and Thankfulness too, having the Joys before Him, in which all his Sorrows shall end. This is a State that gives such inward Repose of Mind, such Peace of Heart, such Spiritual Consolation, as, if it were possible to be false, carries more solid Comfort at

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present, than all the Deceitful and Unsatisfying Pleasures of the most Dissolute and Voluptuous Life. This is that Peace which the World cannot give, which passes all Understanding, which it is more Happy to Feel than it is easy to Express. This is that which makes all a Christian's Enjoyments truly Comfortable, and that allays the Bitterness of the most afflicting Crosses, that animates against the sharpest and most dreadful Conflicts with all outward Evils. Let a Man live under the Sense of God's reconciling Love, and he passes undauntedly and cheerfully thro' whatever befalls him; as when this is withdrawn, he is presently Overwhelm'd with Darknes and Horror, the Sweetest Blessings are Tasteless, and the Lightest Afflictions Intolerable. But to a Mind Conscious of its Own Integrity and God's Favour, nothing can be wanting to perfect its Felicity. *In His Favour is Life*, says the Psalmist; but not content with so mean an Expression, in another place he says, *Thy Loving Kindness is better than the Life itself*. And a Soul thus assur'd of God's Love, and relying upon his Goodness, and Establish'd upon His Truth, what can be able to unsettle or discompose? Thus is the Just Man's inward Peace secur'd, and his Humility and Condescension, and Gentleness and Charity, and all the rest of those
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Christian Virtues, that so admirably dispose People or Societies to live in Peace and good Understanding with their Neighbours, secure his Outward Tranquility as much. These are Dispositions of Mind that the least of all expose us to Affronts or Injuries from abroad, never offend nor provoke the powerful or the great, but engage the Love, and attract the Good-will of all round about us; and as St. Peter speaks, *Who is He that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is Good?*

But besides this Natural Effect of Righteousness, and the Exercise of all the Duties of Religion, there are Secondly, Many Express Promises of the Divine Favour and the Protection of his good Providence, watching over and defending all them who truly trust in him, and Conscientiously Obey his Holy Will and Commandments: *The Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and He will keep him in all his Ways.* He has engag'd himself to be their Shield and Defence, to preserve the Obedient from, or support them under, or deliver them out of all their Trouble; and of this his Careing for the Righteous he has given us so many and so Emphatical Declarations in his Word, that it would be needless to instance any, and endless to instance all; we need but open

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the Bible and read to find 'em, and to cry out with Holy David, not only, *O how plentiful is thy Goodness, which thou hast laid up for Them that fear Thee!* (Provided for 'em in the World to come) but also as it immediately follows: *and that thou hast prepar'd for them that put their Trust in Thee, even before the Sons of Men!*

But in Opposition to all this, it will be, and often has been urg'd, that the Contrary to what we have been asserting is by Experience rather found to be true; that Good Men are so far from being exempted from the Misfortunes and Crosses and Calamities of this Life, that they are as much, if not more, expos'd to them than the Wicked; and that often for their being so, for the sake of that Virtue and Piety, which we have been endeavouring to prove is their Security and Defence; and that on the Other side, the Unjust and the Sinful part of Mankind seem to enjoy the most Worldly Prosperity, and to be the most free from the Afflictions and Crosses of this present Life. *They come in no Misfortune like other Folk, neither are they plagued like other Men, Ps. 73. 5.*

To which may be answer'd, that first, This Observation, that Good Men are the most unhappy in this World, is not so generally true as it is believ'd, even in the outward Appearance of things. For seeing God
allows

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allows us all the reasonable Desires of Nature, and has only forbid us what is Unreasonable and Unnecessary; He that looks after the Happiness of a future Life, does not lose any of the real Conveniencies of This; *tho'* indeed He that places His Happiness here, cannot find it in this World, and is sure to be miserable in Another. But it is no difficult Task to shew, that God forbids nothing but what is really repugnant to Our Well-being here. And upon the Forbearance of what is so, join'd with Our Entire Dependance upon Him for it, he hath made the gracious Offer of Eternal Happiness. It is true in Extraordinary Cases of Persecution he requires more, but then he proposes Extraordinary Rewards to make abundant Recompence for it, and affords Extraordinary Assistance to give sufficient Support under it; but in the common Ordinary Course of Mankind, he requires no more than the avoiding those Excesses in pleasing our Appetites, which even Nature itself and Right Reason condemn. And further it is certain by Experience, that even of these Worldly Goods many good Men have their Share, and that more of the Wicked than the Just fall into the most grievous and insupportable Calamities of this Life; insupportable indeed to them, because brought upon 'em by their Own Sins. For when

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Guilt and Affliction lye heavy upon a Man together, they add to each other's Weight; whereas Affliction meeting with a Conscience clear from Sin or cleans'd by Repentance, is always tolerable, for the most part advantageous and comfortable.

Therefore 2^{dly}, The true Answer to this Objection of the Miseries of the Righteous and the Prosperity of the Wicked, is this, That they that make it are generally mistaken in the Nature of Good and Evil, and have not the True Measures of the Truth of this Proposition of my Text, *That no Evil happens to the Just.* For the Divine Dispensations, whether of Comforts or Crosses, are so far beneficial or hurtful, as they are receiv'd and us'd by Us. That is truly Relatively Good that makes a Man the better, and that truly Evil that makes a Man the worse. If therefore Prosperity and Success make a Man Thankful, and Charitable and Beneficent, then is Prosperity good for him; but if it make him Proud, Insolent, Vain-glorious, forgetful of God and Oppressive of his Neighbour, then whatever seemingly it may be, it is really Evil for him. So, if Adversity makes a Man Clamorous, Murmuring, Envious, Spightful, Injurious, then 'tis Evil indeed to him that suffers it; But if it makes him Humble, Sober, Patient, and relying upon God, then
it

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it is good for him. So that the greatest Affliction, in the Opinion of those that see no further than the Outside of things, when it falls upon a truly good Man, who has learnt out of God's Word to make the Right Use of all his Dispensations, when, I say, Affliction falls upon such a One, because it cannot make him Evil, it is by his Goodness overcome, and itself converted into Good. It loseth the malignity of its Nature, lighting upon Him, and instead of a Curse becomes a Blessing. To the Just Every Affliction is a Preventive of Sin, a Corrective of Corruptions, an Exercise of Grace, a Conformity to Christ, an Evidence of his being a Son of God, an Assurance of his Father's Love, and a Preparative for Heaven.

For these and the like are the Designs of God in inflicting, and the Uses that his Children make in bearing, the Evils that come from his Hand: For from thence they wisely consider that they come, that *Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the Ground.* They know that troubles fall out to 'em, not by blind Chance, but by God's determinate appointment, not according to the Fury of the Wicked, but according to the Will of their Father, a Father that in very Love and Faithfulness doth correct, that hath a Heart
of

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of Compassion even when he seems in his Providence to frown upon 'em, and has prepar'd Strength to support, and Grace to improve and Glory to reward all their Sufferings. And he who by Faith is assur'd that any disasters befalling him are not inflictions of Wrath, but expressions of Love towards him, by God in kindness dispens'd as Trials of his Faith, as Exercises of his Virtue, as occasions of acquiring more plentiful rewards, will count it, as St. James says, *all Joy when he falleth into divers Temptations, James 1. 2. and Rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ.*

For Afflictions have a great Influence and Tendency towards the begetting a Secret and a Spiritual Joy within the Breasts of the Faithful and the Just. For, from their Conformity with Christ here, in Suffering grievous but short Afflictions, they assuredly gather their Conformity with him hereafter, in the fruition of Everlasting Glory; According to that of St. Paul Rom. 8. 17. *If so be we Suffer with him, we shall be also Glorify'd together;* and that of St. Peter, 1 Pet. 4. 13. *Rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his Glory shall be reveal'd, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy.* They glory therefore that they are thus made like to their blessed Master, and as Luther elegantly enough expresses it,
Embrace

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Embrace their Sufferings, as Reliques consecrated by the Touch of Christ.

They consider further, that it is never but for most Wise and Good ends, that God *who hateth nothing that he hath made*, and that *doth not willingly grieve the Children of Men*, much less his Own Children, sends upon them any Scourge or Calamity.

And those Ends are many and various, but all working for Good.

Sometimes for the Punishment, sometimes for the Prevention, of Sin; For certainly there is not the best Man living, but upon a strict and impartial Search of himself, may find Fuel for Affliction, Guilt enough to deserve it, somewhat amiss that requires Amendment, some Corruptions growing into Exorbitancy, some Errors that stand in need of Physick to cleanse them; some Disorders ready to break out, that want a Medicine to prevent them.

This therefore being one chief Reason of God's Visitations, is not Affliction to good Men rather Beneficial than Hurtful? Can they refuse to take, not patiently only, but gladly and willingly, that Cup, which, tho' bitter, yet is temper'd and prepar'd for 'em by so wise and so loving a Physician? Have they not Reason to be thankful, that God rather chooseth to afflict them than forsake them? As long as God Almighty afflicts them,

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them, 'tis plain they are under his Discipline, his Care; and no Man's Condition can be desperate, so long as this Allwise Physician continues his Administration, and reaches Him forth this Medicine, that without his Own fault will most certainly cure and recover Him. Evils as they come not without Desert, for God is Just; so they pass not away without Profit, for God is Good.

Sometimes in particular, they are sent to wean a Man from the Love of the World, and to carry up the Thoughts and Hopes and Desires to that better Country, whereunto We are appointed. If all things went always well, even with good Men, in this Life, they would be building Tabernacles, and crying out, *It is good for us to be here*; and set up their Rest and Hopes on this Side *Jordan*, as the *Reubenites* did in the Country of *Basban* when they found it Rich and Fruitful. God Almighty therefore in Mercy makes this World unpleasing to good Men by Affliction, that they may set the less Value upon it, and fix their Hopes and Desires and Endeavours where only *true Joys are to be found, even that City which is above*; and learn to despise every thing that is lower than Heaven, and shorter than Eternity.

But lastly, Sometimes for the Tryal of his Saints God is pleas'd to Exercise them
with

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with Afflictions, that he may bring them to greater Glory, *As Gold in the Furnace has he try'd them, says the Wise Man, and receiv'd them as a burnt-offering, and in the time of their Visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble, They shall Judge the Nations and have Dominion over the People, and their Lord shall Reign for Ever.* Wisdom 3. 6, 7. It was the Saying of a Wise Heathen, that a Good Man bravely combating with, and getting the better of Afflictions, was *Dignum Deo Spectaculum*, a Sight Worthy of God; and there is somewhat like this even in the Book of God himself, where he seems to be extreamly pleas'd with Job's Integrity, and Glorys as it were in him, and points him out to Satan with Honour and Applause, even when he gave him up a second time to try all his Assaults upon him: *Hast thou consider'd my servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth? a Perfect and an Upright Man; and still he holdeth fast his Integrity, altho' thou movest me against him to destroy him without Cause.* Job 2. 3.

God, when he sees a strong Faith and an Heroick Virtue, is pleas'd to make it Exert and shew itself, to polish and make it shine by Exercise and Use, as he did in those most Heroical Saints of Old, whom Afflictions have made Glorious. Glorious indeed

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indeed in the great Reward and more exceeding weight of *Glory*, that succeeded their Painful and Laborious Warfare ; but more Glorious, for having been thus made like the great Captain of their Salvation, who, as the Apostle tells us, *was made perfect thro' Sufferings*. And This way did he choose both to Found and Propagate his Church, and enlarge the Bounds of his Spiritual Dominion, first by himself not destroying but Dying : then by a Noble Army indeed, but it was such a One as consisted only of Martyrs ; and as other Conquerors boast of slaying their Thousands and Ten Thousands, the Church of Christ on the Contrary was Victorious and Triumph'd and over-spread the World, by having her Thousands and Ten Thousands slain.

From all which we may perceive, that if Affliction is the Lot of the Righteous, yet that if all Circumstances are consider'd it is *No Evil* that *happens to the Just*. For if Affliction be rightly improv'd by Us, to the ends for which God Almighty sends it ; By it God receives the Honour of his Sovereignty, his Justice, his Goodness, his Wisdom, his Truth ; and Man receives the Benefit of Prevention from Sin, Deliverance out of it, Improvement of his Graces, Perfecting of his Soul and Advancement of his Glory, thro' the Mercy of God and his Blessing

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Blessing upon this bitter Cup, the Cup of Affliction.

To conclude therefore, since Afflictions, One time or other, are likely to fall to the share of all Men living, since the best Men can't pretend to any Priviledge or Exemption from 'em, Let us wisely provide against 'em, that if we are not deliver'd from 'em, yet whenever they come they may not have the power to hurt Us. This can no otherwise be done, than by taking up and constantly adhering to Holy Job's Resolution, Chap. 27. v. 5, 6. *'Till I dye I will not remove my Integrity from me : my Righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it goe ; my Heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.* For, as David says, *He that doth these things shall never fall.* This will either secure us from Afflictions, or support us under them, will either carry us thro' this Vale of Misery free from the Calamities incident to our Nature, or the Just Punishment of Sin ; or else, if it shall please God for the Tryal of our Faith, or the Exercise of our Virtue, or the preventing of Sin, or the withdrawing of our Affections from the World, or the encrease of our Future Glory, or any other Wise and Just reason, to visit us with Afflictions, will teach us to make that Use and Advantage of them, that they prove no real Evils

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to Us; but that thro' the assistance of our Blessed Saviour, by Suffering like Him, especially for Him, we may be entitled to a certain hope of reigning with Him to all Eternity.

Which God of his Infinite Mercy &c.

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Acts XIX. 2, 3.

*He said unto them, have ye receiv'd
the Holy Ghost since ye believ'd?
and they said unto him, we have
not so much as heard whether
there be any Holy Ghost.*

*And he said unto Them, unto
what then were ye Baptiz'd?
and they said unto Him, unto
John's Baptism.*

THES E remarkable words are part
of the Narration, which St. *Luke*
gives us, of an encounter, which
the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*
St Paul met with at *Ephesus*, where coming he
O found

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found certain Disciples, very probably the Disciples of *Apollos*, who we read in the foregoing Chapter v. 24, 25. had been there before, and tho' a *Man mighty in the Scriptures and instructed in the way of the Lord*, as it is there exprefs'd, yet as it follows, *knew only the Baptism of John*. And at the first meeting, the very first Question he puts to them is, *Have ye receiv'd the Holy Ghost since ye believ'd?* Which is sufficient to let us understand how very material a Point the believing and receiving the Holy Ghost is to all Christians, since the great Apostle makes it the first Article of his Enquiry, as a Test of these Disciples Faith, a Tryal whether they were yet indeed Christians or no. Their Answer ye have heard read in the Text, namely That they were so far from having receiv'd the Holy Ghost, that they had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghost. Which was so strange an Answer from the Mouths of Christians, for such they pretended to be, we find that *St. Paul* is surpriz'd at it, and asks them *Unto what then were you Baptiz'd?* It being impossible that any true Member of *Christ's Church*, into which none enters but by Baptism, should not have heard of the Holy Ghost. The very Form, and essential words of Baptism being by *Christ's* own Institution and the agreeing Practice of all his Apostles,

I baptize

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I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But St. Paul finding by their Answer, that, as it was said of *Apollos* before, they knew only the Baptism of *John*, meekly instructs them that as *John* was to *Christ*, so was his Baptism to *Christ's* Baptism, a Preparation only and a Forerunner of that which was to come, as St. *John* himself confess'd and openly declar'd and own'd, Luke 3. 16. *I indeed baptize you with Water, but One mightier than I cometh, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire.* And when they heard this, they were Baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord *Jesus*. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with Tongues and prophesied, v. 5 and 6 of this Chapter. This is the full Account of this Adventure of St. Paul at *Ephesus*, by which we plainly may perceive, how important an Article of Christian Faith it is to *Believe*, and how absolutely necessary to Christian Life to *Receive*, the Holy Ghost. And God forbid, that any that have been Baptiz'd into *Christ's* Baptism, should be so ignorant as these Disciples in my Text, who knew no other Baptism than that of *John*. Tho' it is to be fear'd, that many that have receiv'd even Christian Baptism, if they were examin'd concerning their Faith as to this Point, it can scarce be thought

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they

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they should answer, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, yet could give but a very indifferent account of their Belief of this important Article of their Faith. I shall make it therefore the business of this present discourse, to explain as briefly and as clearly as I can, this great Article of our Creed, that every One that repeats it may know what he means when he says, *I Believe in the Holy Ghost*. This being the most proper Argument to entertain your Meditations with this Day, which is for this very purpose celebrated by the Church of *Christ*, and most solemnly Dedicated to the Honour of the Blessed Spirit, in commemoration of that Visible and Glorious appearance of his, as at this time Descending and Resting on the Apostles in cloven Tongues of Fire in the sight of the People of all Nations, enduing them with a most miraculous power of speaking in all languages under Heaven *the wonderful works of God*, Acts 2. 11. And certainly this it self was a wonderful Work of God, that the same means of divers Tongues which was the destroying of *Babel*, should be made use of to work the Building of *Sion*, that the same means that scatter'd Mankind from the Tower of Confusion, should reduce them again to the Fold of Unity, that so the Curse might be taken away and a Blessing
come

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come in its place, the Tongues which were then confus'd for the Presumption of Man, being now united to the Glory of God; there being, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *neither Speech nor Language, but his Praise is heard among them*, as *St. Paul* applies those words of the 19th *Psalm* to the *Apostle's*, *Their sound went into all the Earth, and their words unto the end of the World*, *Rom. 10. 18.* This Day it was that our Saviour made good his Word to his Disciples of sending so gloriously and conspicuously the Comforter which he had promis'd. So gloriously I say, and in so conspicuous and wonderful a Manner. For tho' on the Day that he rose from the Dead he breath'd upon 'em and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*; yet this Miraculous and open Manifestation, This *Powerful* and *Plentiful* Effusion of the Holy Spirit, without which it was impossible that a Church should be gather'd out of all Nations under Heaven, was not till this Day (the Day of *Pentecost* or *Whitsunday*) which we now celebrate. They receiv'd the Holy Ghost then, but they were fill'd with it now, it was then but a still Breath, it is now a *rustling mighty Wind*. And this Day therefore was the Completion of Christ's Promise and the Consummation of the whole Gospel, and as *Ter tullian* elegantly expresses it, *Christus Legis; Spiritus Sanctus Evangelii complementum*: The

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coming of Christ was the fulfilling of the Law, but the coming of the Holy Ghost was the fulfilling of the Gospel.

I shall therefore now give you as perspicuous and as brief account as I can of this Holy Spirit, out of the Holy Scripture which was by himself Inspir'd. And first of his Essence and Nature, and secondly of his Office and Operations. And

1st, As to his Essence. The Holy Ghost is an Eternal Uncreated Spirit, the third Person in the Ever Blessed Trinity, of the same Essence with the Father and the Son, equally God, but Personally distinguish'd from both and alike proceeding from both. That he is truly God is evident,

1st, From the Divine Titles and Names only proper to God, frequently given to him in the Holy Scripture, of which there are too many Instances to be at this time possibly all repeated. One only I shall produce to You for its clearness and perspicuity unanswerable; It is that memorable saying of St. Peter to *Ananias*, whose Story ye well remember in the fifth Chapter of the Acts, *Why hath Satan fill'd thy Heart to lye to the Holy Ghost?* and presently adds, *why hast thou conceiv'd this thing in thy Heart, thou hast not lyed unto Men, but unto God.*

2^{dly}, From

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2dly, From all the Divine Attributes and incommunicable Perfections ascrib'd in Scripture to the Holy Spirit, it infallibly follows that he is God. But in sundry places of Scripture we find that all these Attributes, all the incommunicable Perfections of God equally belong to him as to the Father. Such as are Eternity, Immensity, Omniscience and Omnipotence. Eternity, in that of the Apostle to the Hebr. 9. 14. where he is expressly styl'd *the Eternal Spirit*. Immensity and Omnipresence in that of the Psalmist; Psal. 139. 7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy Presence?* This Question includes a strong Negation, and is as much or more than if he had said, It is impossible to fly from thy Spirit, because it is every where present; as it follows, *If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in Hell behold thou art there. If I take the Wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea &c.* Omniscience, in that of St. Paul 1 Cor. 2. 10, 11. *The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* Particularly the fore-knowledge of things to come, which is proper to God alone, is peculiarly ascrib'd to the Holy Ghost, for which reason all the Prophets are said to be particularly inspir'd by him, and it is one distinguishing character of his Person in the Nicene Creed, *who spake by the Prophets.*

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He has therefore so frequently these Styles in Scripture, the *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*, the *Spirit of Prophecy*, the *Spirit of Truth*, and *Truth* it self, in the abstract 1 John 5. 6 *Because the Spirit is Truth*. Lastly, Omnipotence does also certainly belong to the Holy Ghost, since all those Divine Operations, those Works that none but God can do, are so frequently thro' the whole Scriptures ascrib'd to him. Such as are the acts of Creation and Conservation of all things, the Miracles wrought upon, and by our Blessed Saviour and the works of Grace and Power wrought in the hearts of the Faithful, and chiefly the raising first Christ, and afterward all that believe in him from the Dead. *Rom. 8. 11*. All which works are such as None but an Omnipotent Power can produce, and belong properly and solely to God.

3dly, and Lastly, it is undeniably prov'd, that the Holy Ghost is God by the Divine Worship which is justly paid to him, *who*, as the *Nicene Creed* expresses it, *with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorify'd*. Now this Divine Worship, even by God's own appointment, is paid by us to him at our Baptism, where we acknowledge him to be God, place our Faith in him, fix our Hope on him, profess our Devotion and Obedience to him, by being
Baptiz'd

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Baptiz'd into his Name. This Worship we also pay to him as often as, after the Pattern of that Benediction of *St. Paul*, together with the *Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and the *Love of God*, we pray also for the *Fellowship of the Holy Ghost*. All This it is impossible that God, who is a Jealous God, who has more than Once so solemnly declar'd, that he will not give his Glory to another; that God, I say, should suffer, much less command and institute all this, namely Divine Honour and Religious Worship to be paid to the Holy Ghost, unless he were truly God, is absolutely impossible. But last of all, what great Devotion, what superlative Reverence is due from us to the Holy Spirit, we may learn from what our Saviour himself tells us, that tho' all manner of Sin and Blasphemy should be forgiven to Men, yet the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, neither in this World, neither in the World to come. *Matth.*

12. 31, 32.

There is no Sin committed against the Father, no Word spoken against the Son, but is capable of Forgiveness, but the Sin against the Holy Ghost is for ever unpardonable: Now it is against the Nature of the thing it self, that any Derogation from the honour of a Creature should be so highly culpable, and should be capable of so great aggra-

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aggravation, as to be only out of the reach of God's Pardon and Mercy, which to all other most grievous Sins extends it self. It cannot, I say, be possibly conceiv'd, that the honour of a Creature should be thus prefer'd, thus stronger guarded and fortify'd, than the honour of God himself. It remains therefore, that the Holy Ghost, against whom only this unpardonable Sin can be committed, must of necessity be no Created Being, but God Eternal, Co-essential and Co-equal to the Father and the Son in Unity of Nature, and Distinct from them both, in Person only. Which Distinction when I shall briefly have made appear out of Scripture, I think I shall have shewn you all that is necessary to be Known and Believ'd of the Nature, and shall proceed to the Office of the Holy Ghost. That therefore, tho' he is One in Nature with the Father and the Son because he is God, and because there can be but One God, both which Propositions are plainly in many places of Scripture deliver'd, yet that he is distinguish'd from both in his Person, is as manifestly in the same Scriptures taught. From the Father first, in all those places which are too numerous to be reckon'd and too obvious to need it, where he is said to be sent by the Father, to be given by the Father, to proceed from the Father, to make Intercession

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cession for us with the Father, and the like; and also from the Son, where he is called the Spirit of the Son, *Gal. 4. 6*, where he is sent by the Son, where he is said to receive of the Son and thereby to glorify him, *He shall glorify me for he shall receive of mine, Joh. 16. 14.* where we are told, that he descended and rested upon the Son, that the Son was led by him, anointed by him, and by his Operation and Overshadowing Conceive'd of the Blessed Virgin: and lastly, where Our Saviour expressly distinguishes him from Himself by calling him Another, *John 14. 16. I will pray the Father and he shall give You another Comforter, that he may abide with You for ever.* And as in all these places of Scripture the Holy Ghost is distinguish'd from the Father, and from the Son severally, so very frequently also is he distinguish'd from 'em both, jointly and together. Out of all which I shall mention but one, because of its clearness, which is that account of *St. Matthew 3. 16.* so he saw *the Spirit of God descending like a Dove and lighting upon him, and lo! a Voice from Heaven saying, This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Where it is very evident, that the Person of the Holy Ghost was manifestly distinguish'd from the Person of the Son upon whom he lighted, and the Person of the Father who spake from Heaven of his Son. All which is
enough

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enough to let us understand that the Holy Scriptures do as certainly and clearly make Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as distinct in their Persons, as they make them One in their Nature. And let thus much suffice as concerning the Essence or Nature of the Holy Ghost ; for this is all that the Word of his own Inspiring has reveal'd to us of himself, and further it is neither dutiful, nor reverent, nor safe for us to enquire.

I proceed now to His Office.

By His Office I mean that which is peculiarly ascrib'd to Him in the Salvation of Mankind, as the Work wrought by him, and for which he is purposely sent by the Father and the Son. And That proper and peculiar Office of the Holy Ghost is Sanctification, he being the Author of all Internal Holiness and Sanctifying Grace. Not that the Other Persons of the Blessed Trinity are excluded from a joint Concurrence in this Work, For all the Actions of the Blessed Trinity, excepting those that are of extrinsecal Relation, are the undivided Works of all the Three. According to that Maxim uniformly and constantly ever receiv'd in the Catholick Church, *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*. But because We are of too gross an Understanding to be
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able to conceive the Distinct Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, without some Distinction of their Offices and Operations; in reference to Us therefore does the Scripture condescend so far to our Capacities, as to *attribute* by way of Appropriation, as Divines call it, some of those Great Works to One Person, and some to Another, after a more special Manner than to the Rest. Thus Power and Creation is commonly ascrib'd to the Father, Wisdom and Redemption to the Son, and Goodness and Sanctification to the Holy Ghost. According as we are taught in the excellent Catechism of our Church, where the Question after the Creed being put, *What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?* The Answer is, *First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the World; Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeem'd me and all Mankind; Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the Elect People of God.* Sanctification then being the chief and peculiar Office of the Blessed Spirit, we shall endeavour to shew out of Holy Writ, by what Method he proceeds in this great Work, in which his several Operations may more distinctly be consider'd.

And the first Operation of this Holy Spirit in the Work of our Sanctification is the producing of Faith in us. For we being
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by Nature totally void of all saving Truth, and under an impossibility of knowing of ourselves the Will of God, since as the Apostle says, *1 Cor. 2. 10, 11. None knoweth the things of God but the Spirit of God, This Spirit that searcheth all things, yea even the deep things of God, revealeth them to the Sons of Men*; nor is that all, he does not only propound to us outwardly and generally all Saving Truths in the Holy Books written as they were Inspir'd by him, but inwardly and particularly Illuminates the Understanding of all that Believe, that they may see and embrace the Truth. He is therefore call'd by the Apostle, *Ephes. 1. 17. The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*. Not of Revelation only, in propounding the Object to be Believ'd, but of Wisdom, in enlightening the Subject that is to Believe. So that not Only the outward Revelation of the Word of God, but the internal Illumination of the Soul of Man, is altogether both in its first Original and all its further Growth and Encrease, the Gift of the Holy Ghost. But as the Things of God are Foolishness to the Natural Man's Understanding, so they are Enmity to his Will: the Second Part therefore of this great Work of Sanctification is the renewing of Man's Will by the same Spirit, and making it inclinable and obsequious to the Will of God, which is properly

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properly called Regeneration. *According to his Mercy he saveth us by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. 3. 5.* The Holy Ghost makes the New Creature, and is the first Principle of the Spiritual Life. By the same Spirit that Christ himself was Conceived, by the same Spirit also must the Christian be. The same way that the Old World was made in the beginning, by the Spirit moving upon the Waters of the deep, the very same way is the World made New by the same Spirit moving on the Waters of Baptism. For as our Saviour told *Nicodemus, except a Man be born again of Water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*

These are the two Principal Parts of the Office of the Holy Ghost, namely, the renewing of Man in the two commanding Faculties of the Soul, the Understanding and the Will; without the Renovation of both which, it is impossible to have a Sanctifying or Saving Faith. For after having offered Outward Motives of Credibility, sufficient to create a Rational Assent in the Mind, out of this Rational Assent to form in the Heart a Christian Faith, which includes, besides a bare Belief, a Complacency also and Delight in the Doctrine that it receives, is a further Effect of the good Spirit of God, evincing the Goodness of the Gospel

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spel to such as are perswaded of the Truth of it, and rendring it to the Will *Worthy of all Acceptation*, that by the Understanding was before own'd to be a *Faithful Saying*. Consequent to these and depending upon them are all the Other several parts of the Office of the same Spirit in our Sanctification, which I shall but briefly touch upon as they are in sundry places of Scripture rather hinted at, than at large describ'd to us. In short then, this blessed Spirit by a Secret and Unconceivable, but a Powerful and Effectual Operation sanctifies all the Elect People of God, abiding in 'em, and quickening and actuating them from their first new Birth of Regeneration to their second Birth at the Resurrection; for as St. Paul tells us, *He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you*, Rom. 8. 11. By Him we are regenerate at the first in our Baptism, By Him after confirm'd by the Imposition of hands, By Him after renew'd to Repentance when we fall away, By Him taught all our Life long what we knew not, put in mind of what we forget, stirr'd up in what we are dull, helped in our Prayers, relieved in our Infirmities, comforted in our Heaviness, joined to Christ our Head, and assur'd of our Adoption and Everlasting Inheritance. In a word seal'd

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to the Day of Redemption, and rais'd up again at the Last Day.

Thus doth the Holy Spirit Direct, Sanctifie, and Govern every particular Member of the Mystical Body of Christ.

But lastly, for the effecting all these and the like particulars, it is the Office of the same Spirit, to take a *general* care of the whole Church, in setting apart and Sanctifying Persons for the Duty of the Ministry, ordaining them to intercede between God and His People, to send up Prayers to God for them, to Bless them in his Name, to teach the Doctrine of the Gospel, and rightly and duly to administer the holy Sacraments instituted by Christ; in short, to perform all things necessary *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying of the Body of Christ.* Ephes. 4. 12. He who in the beginning, and at the first Foundation of the Church, enlighten'd the Apostles as at this time, and endu'd them with Power from above, to perform Personally their Apostolical Function, fitted them also for the Ordination of others and the committing of a standing Power unto a Successive Ministry to the end of the World, who are thereby oblig'd *to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers, to feed the Church of God,* Acts 20. 28. By all these and the like

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means,

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means, does the Spirit of God Sanctify the Sons of Men, and is therefore properly and peculiarly, and in distinction to all other Spirits, called the *Holy Spirit*; and thus I have, as plainly and as briefly as I could, out of the unerring words of Scripture describ'd to you, both the Nature and Office of the Holy Ghost; his Nature, in that he is the Spirit of God, and truly God; his Office, in that he is the Holy, the Sanctifying Spirit.

And of this Spirit it is, that St. Paul in my Text so solicitously and in the first place enquires of the Disciples that he met at *Ephesus*, Acts 19. 1. whether they had receiv'd Him or no. Whereby he shews us the absolute Necessity there is for all Christians to receive the *Holy Ghost*, without whose dwelling within us we cannot be the *Temple*, without whose leading us we cannot be the *Sons of God*. We all of us have receiv'd this Spirit at our Baptism, wherein the Holy Ghost, into whose Name we were baptiz'd, first regenerated us, and then took up his Dwelling in us, and would still abide in us and actuate us, and direct and assist and comfort us, if we gave but suitable Reception, any kind Entertainment to so Divine a Guest. But, Alas! on the contrary, by our Deafness to secret Whisperings and holy Suggestions, have we not rather, as St. Paul speaks, griev'd the *Holy Spirit of God*; have we

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we not by obstinate Impenitency, as St. Stephen speaks, *resisted the Holy Ghost*, have we not *quenched the Spirit*, have we not finally by a continuance in Sin and those Pollutions, which it is impossible that That Spirit of Holiness and Purity can endure to dwell with, driven him and quite chas'd him away? made him pronounce the fearful *Migremus hinc*, and leave the Place he had taken up in our Hearts, to be fill'd with wicked and impure Spirits, which surely will come and take possession there, whenever he deserts us? Would we know and be assur'd whether yet the Holy Ghost is abiding in us? Would we be satisfy'd of this that so highly concerns us? There is but one sure way to come to this knowledge, As the Tree is known by its Fruit, so is the Holy Ghost. Now the Fruits of the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul reckons them up Gal. 5. are these, Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness, Temperance; On the contrary, the Deeds of the Flesh are these, as the same Apostle there enumerates them, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like. This is the Glass wherein we may behold our selves, whether we have the Holy Ghost within us or the Spirit of

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the Flesh. If our Works are Virtuous and Good, consonant to the Rule of God's Holy Word, savouring and tasting not of the Flesh but of the Spirit, then we may assure our selves that the Holy Ghost dwells in us, and has consecrated us by his inhabitation to be a Temple to himself; and if so, let us ever Worship, ever Obey, ever Listen to him and never Grieve him, and withall let us give all Praise and Thanks to our Lord and Saviour Christ, for the gracious Exchange that he has made with Us, by taking of Us our *Flesh*, and *sending to Us his Spirit*! But if we find by this impartial Examination, that by our Sins, if we have not quite driven this Blessed Spirit out, yet we have justly provok'd him to depart, let us seriously considering the infinite danger that inevitably follows his withdrawing from us, Mortifie all those Deeds of the Flesh which ye have heard describ'd by the Apostle, cast out those Impurities that grieve and offend him, and so cleanse our Hearts that they may be fit Mansions for the God of Purity to continue and reside in. Ever Praying in the words of Holy *David* and our own Church, *O God make clean our Hearts within Us*, which is the just preparation for the Next Petition, *and take not Thy Holy Spirit from Us*.

To which Holy Spirit, together with &c.

S E R M O N X.

SERMON X.

EPHES. II. 8, 9, 10.

*For by Grace are ye Sav'd, through
Faith, and that not of yourselves :
it is the gift of God :*

*Not of Works, lest any Man should
boast :*

*For we are his Workmanship, cre-
ated in Christ Jesus unto good
works, which God hath before
ordain'd that we should Walk in
them.*

IT is a solemn Charge of St. Paul to
Titus, whom he had made Bishop of
Crete, and left there to provide all
things that might conduce to the Edi-
fication of that Church, *These things I will*
P 3 *that*

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that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believ'd in God, might be careful to maintain good works, Tit. 3. 8. And it is equally the Duty of every Minister of the Gospel to take care, that as the Necessity of Good Works should always be urg'd and press'd as indispensable Qualifications, so also that Faith should at the same time have its just Prerogative asserted, of being the proper and immediate Instrument of Salvation. But further and chiefly to take especial heed, that how great share soever either Faith or Good Works may claim, or in what manner soever they may be allow'd to contribute to this great Work, yet in the End all should be entirely ascrib'd to Grace, To the exceeding Riches of God's Grace, in his kindness to us, through Christ Jesus, Ephes. 2. 7.

For if we are sav'd through Faith, yet it is by Grace; neither is that Faith of our selves, it is the Gift of God. And tho' God has made Holiness the Condition of Happiness, and in order to that has before ordain'd that we should walk in good works, yet is Our Salvation not of Works, lest any Man should boast: lest any Man should fondly imagine, that He could merit by them, or of Himself be able to perform them; for if we do them, this is also the Gift of God, it is because We are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to Good Works.

We

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We have therefore here before us to consider three things, of which if we can by God's assistance give a clear and satisfactory Account, it will be of excellent Use both to the composing the Differences, which have so much divided the Church of Christ, and also to the directing Ourselves in the sure Way, how by a True Faith and Willing Obedience we may attain to the End of Our Hopes, even the Salvation of Our Souls: and all this *To the Praise of the Glory of his Grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved*, Ephes. 1. 6.

I. The first of these is Grace, *By* which We are sav'd.

II. The second is Faith, *Through* which We are sav'd.

III. The third is Good Works, *Of* which We are not, but *without* which we cannot be sav'd.

I. First *By Grace are ye Sav'd*. The Truth of which Proposition to deny, is to deny the whole Gospel expressly called by St. Paul Acts 20. 24, 32. *the Gospel of the Grace of God*, and the *Word of his Grace*.

But this Word Grace has several significations in Scripture, yet all of them, or at least as many of them as can any way re-

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late to the Text we have in hand, may be reduc'd to these two.

1st. First God's undeserved Love and Favour to Mankind.

2^{dly}. Secondly the gracious Effects of that Love and Favour, The gifts flowing from it.

Or briefly, *In Gratiam Dantem & in Gratiam Datam*, The Grace *that Gives* or the Grace *that is Given*, that is, the Grace that is *in God* from all Eternity, and in time *from him* Reveal'd in the Covenant of the Gospel, or That Grace which he for ever continues to communicate to Man, thereby exciting him by Faith to Accept, and by Obedience to Perform the Conditions of that Covenant.

1st. The first of these, the Grace that is in God, is no other than God Himself, consider'd as freely willing from all Eternity, first the Being and then the Well-being of all his Creatures. For as there is nothing in God which is not God, since He is a Being purely simple and uncompounded, We may safely say that this Grace, the inexhaustible Fountain of all Derivative Goodness, diffus'd thro' the whole Creation, is his very Nature, his Essence, his Adorable Self; which is no more than St. *John* says, when he tells us, *that God is Love*. Nay, among the wiser Heathens them-

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themselves we may trace some footsteps, and discover at a distance some glimmering Rays of this glorious Truth, which forc'd so noble an Expression as This from one of their Philosophers, who had no Light but that of Reason and Nature, that alluding to the Fabulous Transformations of their fancy'd God, when he design'd to make the World, *Transform'd himself into Love*. What but Love and a desire of Communicating his Own Goodness could move God, who from all Eternity was Happy in Himself, who neither stood in need, or was capable of receiving any addition of Bliss or Glory from any Creature, to produce out of nothing, either Angels or Men to be partakers of his Over-flowing Fullness? and to command into Being, this admirable Frame of Heaven and Earth for their Use and Enjoyment? All this must be allow'd to have been from the free and unbounded Grace of God.

But it is not of this Undeserved Favour of God in making us after his Own Image, tho' that is just matter of Adoration and Praise, but the more stupendous Love in renewing us from what we had made Ourselves, that the Grace mention'd in my Text, is to be understood. The Grace, not by which we are *Created*, but the Grace *by* which we are *Sav'd*. For we are to take Notice, that there are two sorts

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sorts of Grace (or rather Grace conversant about two sorts of Objects) in God. The One simply Beneficent, the other Merciful too. The first of these, which is Purely Beneficent, is that which God had from Everlasting in himself towards the Creature, even before his being so, when he had yet no Existence but in the Eternal Wisdom of Him, *who calleth things that are not as tho' they were*, Rom. 4. 17. For from his Grace, as well as to his Glory, and for his pleasure all things are and were Created, or which he in time exercis'd to the Creature actually produc'd into Being, and still remaining Innocent and therefore Happy. The Other which is more than barely Beneficent, including Mercy as well as Love, is That which God makes use of towards the Creature sinful, and consequently Miserable. For all the Good that the Almighty Goodness affords the most Pure and most Holy, the Brightest and Perfectest Being in Earth or Heaven is of free Grace, since He owes them Nothing of all that He gives, and They on the contrary Owe wholly and entirely to Him whatsoever they receive. That which plac'd the Angels in Heaven, that admits them to so near access to his Person and the full Contemplation of his Glory, that maintains them in their Original Integrity, and honours them with the Confidence

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fidence of his secrets, and the immediate Execution of his Commands, is nothing else but Grace, since nothing without himself could oblige him to raise those Blessed Spirits to that height and excellence of Glory, which renders them the first and most noble Intelligences of the whole Creation. That which made Man but *little Lower* than the Angels, and Crown'd him with Glory and Honour, that by which God seated *Adam* in Paradise, and gave him Dominion over the Works of his Hands, that which constituted him his Representative, and made him as it were a Visible God upon Earth, was meer Grace, since it was in God's Power and wholly at his free disposal, whether he would at all produce him out of Nothing, or if he were pleas'd to do so far, whether he would raise him to so great Dignity, or place him in the Rank even of the meanest of those Creatures which he *put under his Feet*. And should *Adam* have persever'd in that original Righteousness wherein he was Created, yet all the Happiness he would have then possess'd, would have been nothing else but Grace, since he ow'd not only all he had, but all that he was, to God, and could receive nothing from Him, but as a Gift from his undeserved Bounty. But still this would not have been Mercy, since Man never having offended God, God could have had

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had no occasion of exercising that Divinest Perfection, the very Crown of all the Blessed Attributes in the Deity, that most sweet and liberal and tender and amiable Goodness that delights in forgiving Sinners. Divines therefore have distinguish'd Grace into *Creating* and *Saving* Grace. *Creating* Grace is that by which God has given a Being to the Angels, with all the incomparable Privileges belonging to their Heavenly Nature, and Life to Man, with all the glorious Prerogatives with which he was at first invested. *Saving* Grace is that by which he raises us from our Fall, has given us his Son, confers upon us his Spirit, pardons our Offences, and brings us to his Kingdom.

As we cannot sufficiently value, nor by thought conceive, nor by words express this inestimable *Saving* Grace; so we cannot without horror and shame and confusion of Face reflect, how soon God's first *Creating* Grace was repay'd by his Creatures with Apostacy and Rebellion, and as a just Consequence of that, how soon that Noble Creature, whom he had made but *a little lower than the Angels*, was reduc'd to a Condition much worse than that of *the Beasts that perish*. Divested of all Original Righteousness, darken'd in his Understanding, Perverse in his Will, disorder'd in his Affections

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ons, a Captive and Slave to the Domini-
on of Sin and the Tyranny of Satan, ob-
noxious to all the Miseries and Evils of this
present Life, and, what is the most dread-
ful of all, justly hateful to God, and the
Object of his Insupportable Wrath, and by
that concluded under the Sentence of Ever-
lasting Death, and the Torments of Hell
to all Eternity. This was the sad Estate not
of Our First Father only, but of all Us his
numerous and wretched Offspring. And in
this most deplorable Condition, when we
lay, like *Ezekiel's wretched Infant, polluted
in our Blood, when no Eye pity'd Us*, then
this Saving Grace, this Love of God *pass'd
by Us, and said unto Us, Live, yea said unto
Us, when we were in our Blood, Live, Ezek.*
16. 5, 6: Which shews, how far this Good-
ness of Redemption surpasses that of Crea-
tion. In the Creation indeed there was no
Object to invite, much less to deserve, but
neither was there any thing to hinder or
obstruct the Divine Goodness. Tho' there
was no Worth, there was no Unworthiness.
But the Object of Redeeming Grace was
the Wretched and Unworthy. There was
not only in our Nature an Absence of all
Good, that might move the Divine Com-
passion, but there was a positive Malignity
against *that God* that should pardon, against
that Christ that should satisfy, against *that*
Holy

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Holy Spirit that should apply both that Satisfaction and Pardon: *Peradventure* for a Good Man, says St. Paul, some would even dare to dye. Rom. 5. 7. But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us, the Righteous for the Ungodly, v. 8. We were in open Hostility and Rebellion against God, yet even then, says the same Apostle, when we were Enemies we were reconcil'd to God by the Death of his Son, Rom. 5. 10. Our Saviour tells us truly, Greater Love hath no Man shewn than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends, Joh. 15. 13. But behold a greater than Man is here, and consequently a greater Love than Man's Love, a Love that lays down its Life for its Enemies. Here is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved Us, and sent his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins, 1 John 4. 10. This is a Love so far exceeding all that was ever call'd by that Name, that St. Paul himself, even when he prays for the Ephesians, that they may be able to comprehend the breadth and length and height of the Love of God in Christ, yet is forc'd immediately to subjoin, which passeth all Knowledge, Eph. 3. 19. This is that ineffable, that unconceivable Grace, which is in God, and which is God. For it is this that first mov'd God to Create and then to Redeem the World; and since God is by all confels'd to be the first

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first Mover, moving all things Himself, from without Immovable; it unavoidably follows, that whatever can be properly said to move God, can be no Other than God himself. This is that Original Spring and Eternal Source of that Gracious Dispensation, which in time God was pleas'd to reveal to Mankind in the Adorable Mysteries of our Redemption, which is

2^d, A second Acceptation of the Word in Scripture, wherein Grace is often taken for the Manifestation of Grace, that is the Gospel, the Covenant of Grace, *the Grace which came by Jesus Christ*, as St. John speaks, c. 1. v. 17. *The Grace of God which has appear'd to all Men, bringing Salvation*, as also St. Paul, Tit. 2. 11.

And this most Glorious, as well as Gracious Display of the Divine Goodness, in the Means of Reconciliation tender'd to Mankind in the Gospel, as it is the chiefest of all the Gifts of God, (for herein he gives us his Own Son, and if he spares not him, *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things*) so by us it may be justly esteem'd, it must be look'd upon as a Gift, that has in it all the Qualities that can make a Gift super-eminently perfect. In a Gift there are three things to be consider'd, The Giver, The Person to whom it is given, and the Manner of giving.

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In the first place then, He that gives, to do it in Sovereign Perfection must give of his Own, and he must have also both Power and Will to give all that he can give, as far as the capacity of the Receiver is able to bear ; He must therefore be Infinitely Good, that he may give with the greatest readiness of Will, and Infinitely Powerful, that he may give to the full extent of the Wants of the Receiver, and Sovereignly Independent, that he may give without hopes of Return, otherwise whatsoever is given would not be a Gift, but a Bargain.

2dly, That a Gift may be said to be in full Perfection, he to whom it is given must Merit nothing from the Giver, for that were rather the payment of a Debt, than bestowing of a Gift, if there were any Merit in the Receiver. He ought also to be in the extreamest need of what is given, or else he might be excusable if he slighted and refused the Offer.

Lastly, as to the Manner of giving, That ought to be free, for whatsoever things are given by Compulsion, are not Gifts, but Spoils. And since as before was said, the Gift must prevent all manner of Deserts, that it be not a Reward, it ought to precede also even the Hopes, or Desires, or Petitions of the Receiver, because by these means he may in some manner be said to deserve.

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All these Qualities concurring and eminently shining forth in the Covenant of Grace, tender'd to us in the Gospel, make it a Gift sovereignly Perfect, *perfect even as He Himself, the great Donor, is Perfect.*

Especially, if we consider God's infinite Condescension in the favourable Terms propos'd to us in this Word of Reconciliation; in which, contrary to the extreme Rigour of the Old Law, the Voice of which was, *Do this and live, fail in the least Tittle and dye*, he is accounted Just in the Eyes of God, not whose Righteousness is manifest, but whose Sin is cover'd. He whose uniform and serious and conscientious, tho' not absolute and unerring and sinless Obedience, is for the sake of that perfect Righteousness of Christ approv'd by God, who knowing our Frame, and pitying our Weakness, is graciously pleas'd to accept of hearty Endeavours instead of exact Performances, Repentance instead of Innocence, and Sincerity instead of Perfection. And yet further, These Endeavours, and This Repentance, and This Sincerity he does not only accept of Us, but give to Us. For it had not been sufficient to have contriv'd so wonderful a Method of Salvation, and to have communicated to Mankind the Knowledge, and offer'd to him the Advantage of it by Jesus Christ, unless he had also endu'd him

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from above, with a Power to lay hold of it, by enlightning his Understanding, and enflaming his Will, and so enabling him by *Faith* to embrace this *Covenant*, and by Obedience to *fulfill* the Conditions of it.

And this is another Acceptation of the Word, according to which, *by Grace* is signify'd that Divine Principle infus'd into our Souls by God's good Spirit, quickning us, and raising us from the Death of Sin, to the Life of Righteousness, that Participation of the Divine *Nature*, by which we are made conformable to the Divine *Will*. For of Our selves, alas! and from Our *Own* Nature, not only weaken'd but deprav'd, we are not able to conceive one good Thought, much less to bring forth any righteous Work. It is from Grace alone preventing our Wishes, and stirring up our Wills, and working with those Wills when stirr'd up, that *all holy Desires, all good Counsels, and all just Works do proceed*. Not only the Execution of the Hand, and the Contrivance of the Head, but the *Preparation of the Heart is from the Lord*, Prov. 16. 1. The very first Dispositions and Tendencies of our Minds towards God, the very Desire of Grace is from Grace, from his Spirit that *worketh in us both to will and to do*. So that it is but Justice upon every good Quality that we possess, to inscribe what is here particularly said to Faith,

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Faith, *This not of our selves, it is the Gift of God*; and upon every good Action that we do, that of the same Apostle elsewhere, *yet not I, but the Grace of God that is in me.* 1 Cor. 15. 10. But this Grace, tho' mighty to instruct, to help, to invite, to perswade, yet is not violent to force or compell either the Assent of the Understanding, or the Co-operation of the Will. The Grace of God like the Wisdom of God (as it is express'd in the Book of *Wisdom*) acts *Fortiter sed Sæviter, Mightily yet Sweetly* does She order all things, is Powerful but not Irresistible. It requires to be kindly entertain'd, and obsequiously comply'd with, and by repeated applications to the Throne of Grace diligently and incessantly to be pray'd for, that it may be continu'd to Us and encreas'd in Us. We must Ourselves Co-operate with it, and not think to be wholly Passive, Unactive, and Unconcern'd in the great Work of our Own Salvation. Because God is Powerful in Working in us and for us, this is so far from being a Reason why We should be Idle, and, leaving all to his mighty Operation, be utterly careless of Ourselves, that it is very justly urg'd by St. Paul, as a forcible Motive and strong Reason to the contrary. *Work out your Own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, For it is God that Worketh in you both to will and to do according to his good Plea-*

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sure. Thus God in the Law commands, *Sanctify Yourselves, for it is I the Lord that Sanctify You*; as on the other hand we find his Saints praying God to do that, which they know to be their Duty to do themselves, *Wash me thoroughly from my Sins and cleanse me from my Wickedness*, is the Prayer of One, tho' 'tis God's Command to All. *Wash You, make you Clean, and Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye dye, O house of Israel*, is God's Peremptory Command and Affectionate Expostulation to the same People, in whose behalf the Prophet as Earnestly prays *Turn Thou us, O Good Lord, and so shall we be turned*. Which with innumerable Instances of the like Nature, every where to be met withall in Scripture, what do they teach us but that the same Work is sometimes apply'd to God and sometimes to Us, to signifie that as God by his preventing, and following, and assisting, and confirming Grace, is the first Author and last Finisher of every Holy Purpose and Righteous Work in Us; so there is requir'd on Our part a Concurrence of Will and ready Obedience to the Motions and Suggestions of his Blessed Spirit, else this Grace (which meeting with an Obsequious Heart would be productive of every good Work to our Endless Salvation) might by perverseness and obstinacy be rendred fruitless and ineffectual, and at
last

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last for Our Unworthiness be wholly taken from Us, to Our Just and Endless Condemnation. Hence it is that the Apostle so earnestly beseeches the *Corinthians* that they *Receive not the Grace of God in Vain*, That he is so sollicitous in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, That they look diligently *Lest any Man fall from the Grace of God*, which by a long and contemptuous Resistance of it, he both supposes to be possible, and aggravates the horrible guilt and unspeakable danger of such Contempt from the Impossibility of Repentance. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlighten'd, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them to Repentance.* And if he that despised Moses's Law, dy'd without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of Grace.

But lastly, as Grace if not by us resisted, and despitefully us'd, is the first Cause and principal Worker of every Virtuous and holy Action in us, so it is Grace also that not only at present accepts, but finally re-

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wards what it self at first enabled us to perform: *O Lord, thou wilt ordain Peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our Works in us, Isaiah 26. 12.*

And when we consider the glorious Reward laid up for us, we must here especially be convinc'd and acknowledge, that *We are sav'd by Grace. Not of Works* certainly, lest any Man should boast, as if so unconceivable an Exaltation, as the Incomprehensible Glories of Eternal Life, could possibly be claim'd as Due upon the score of the Worth and Value of our most excellent Performances. Heaven is our Inheritance, not our Purchase; not our Purchase by Works, but our Inheritance by Adoption. The Doctrine of Merit, as taught in the Church of *Rome*, is so contradictory to Reason, as well as Scripture, that just to hint at the Absurdities of it, is to confute it. To make a Work Meritorious these Conditions are requir'd,

First, That it be not a Debt, for what Thanks is there for paying what was long before due; Yet what Service is it possible for the Holiest Creature to pay, which from his first Creation was not by a most just Title indispensibly due to his Creator? all that we have, all that we are, is his by Eternal Right; and when we have pay'd all that we can pay, we have pay'd no more,
 nay,

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may, not so much, as we owe; when we have done all that we can do, we must own ourselves to be but *unprofitable Servants*.

2dly, That any Work may merit, it should confer some Good, some Advantage to the Person towards whom it is perform'd. But *can a Man be profitable to God?* says holy Job; and again, *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thy hand?*

3dly, In order to merit of any Person, the Services we present him with ought to be our Own, at least not His, to whom we present them: whereas it has been sufficiently before shown, that we have of ourselves no Ability to do any Good, that whatever of that kind we offer unto God, was first his Own Gift to us; and if it has any *Value with him*, it is because it proceeded from him. Not only Heaven, but all the Graces that are necessary to purify and prepare us for it, we receive from *Undeserved Mercy*; so that God, when he confers Eternity of Bliss upon Us, crowns not in Us our Works, but his own Grace.

4thly, Where Merit is pretended, there ought to be some Proportion between the Service and the Reward; but, alas! who sees not the infinite Distance between that *Eternal Weight of Glory*, and the momentary and light Performances of the greatest Saint that ever liv'd upon Earth?

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And

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And here by the way I can't but take notice of that nice but false Distinction, which they of the Church of *Rome* make use of. They will allow, that our Sins are forgiven, and we so far justify'd for the sole Merits of Christ, but that we are rewarded with Eternal Happiness, That, they say, must be by our Own. But where is the Ground of this Difference, why must the Death of Christ, which made a full Satisfaction for all Sin, be absolutely necessary, and the sole Cause of our being sav'd from Eternal Death; and the Life of Christ, which fulfill'd all Righteousness, not be esteem'd equally necessary, and the sole Cause of our being admitted to Eternal Life?

The astonishing Disproportion between the Work and the Recompence can be accounted for by nothing but Grace, nor obtain'd by any thing but by that same Grace, producing in us Gratitude and Love. For it is for Love that That glorious Recompence is laid up, which *Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, neither has it enter'd into the heart of Man to conceive what God has prepar'd for them that love Him.* This is the substantial Reason of our Hope, and this unmeasurable Inequality between the Service and the Reward no longer confounds our Understanding, or staggers our Belief. For tho' our Works are really nothing worth,
the

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the Affection, from which they proceed, may be of great Value in the Sight of God; and when it is not strict Justice, but free Grace that rewards, and when it is not the Work that is rewarded, but the Love, there is no Reward too great for that free Infinite Grace to bestow.

Thus every way we see all Pretence to Merit excluded. To which Purpose it is very well worth our Observation, in what different Terms the Apostle expresses the different Retributions of Sin and Holiness, in the last Verse of the 6th Chapter to the *Romans*. Death is there call'd *the Wages*; *τι ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ ἁμαρτανίου*, the Stipend which we have earn'd, and which without Injustice cannot be detain'd from us: whereas Everlasting Life, let our Righteousness be never so great, is yet *χαρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *the free and gratuitous Gift of God* thro' *Jesus Christ*. So directly contrary are the words of this holy Apostle to the Devices of those wicked Men, who have made Sins that are not Mortal, and good Works that are Meritorious. Whereas our best and most holy Endeavours must beg for Grace and Favour, and our Sins only are the Works by which we can properly merit any thing from God; Tho' that alas! is a dreadful Recompence, even his Wrath and everlasting Damnation.

Let

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Let us therefore, laying aside all vain Trust in Ourselves or our Deservings, rely wholly upon that Grace by which we are sav'd; For by Grace ye are sav'd thro' Faith, but not of Works. Of which two last it remains to treat, which I shall reserve to another Opportunity, and at present conclude with exhorting all earnestly to pray in the Words of the Apostle, *That He would make all Grace to abound in us, that we may abound to every good Work, 2 Cor. 9. 8. That Grace may reign thro' Righteousness to Eternal Life, Rom. 5. 21. And now to our Father that hath loved us, and given us everlasting Consolation and good Hope thro' Grace, 2 Thess. 2. 16. The God of all Grace, who has called us into his eternal Glory by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 5. 10.*

To him with the same Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one God, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Glory, Honour, Might, Majesty, and Dominion both now and for Evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N XI.

SERMON XI.

EPHES. II. 8, 9, 10.

*For by Grace are ye Sav'd, through
Faith, and that not of yourselves:
it is the gift of God:*

*Not of Works, lest any Man should
boast:*

*For we are his Workmanship, cre-
ated in Christ Jesus unto good
works, which God hath before
ordain'd that we should Walk in
them.*

IN treating of these Words, I observ'd
three things very considerable in them
contain'd, which in their Order I
propos'd to make the Subject of my Dis-
course.

I. The

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I. The First of these, I then told you, was Grace; By which we are Sav'd.

II. The Second, Faith, *through* which we are Sav'd.

III. The Third, Good Works, *Of* which we are not, but without which we cannot be Sav'd.

Of the First of these, Grace, and how entirely our Salvation depends upon it, and ought wholly to be ascrib'd to it, I at that time discours'd at large, concluding that without all Controversy, by *Grace ye are Sav'd*. By Grace, but That not *Irresistible*, Through Faith, but That not *Idle*, but productive of Good Works, and those Good Works not Meritorious of, but yet necessary to Salvation.

Of which two last therefore, namely Faith, the immediate Instrument of Salvation, and Good Works, the necessary Qualification of all that would be Sav'd, it remains in order now to treat.

II. *Through Faith ye are Sav'd, and that not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God.*

In which Words two things are Observable.

1st, That Salvation is through Faith.

2^{dly}, That this Saving Faith is not of ourselves, it is the Gift of God.

The

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The latter of which I shall first endeavour to make good, because it seems to have been the Apostles primary and chief Intent, to shew that whatever Subordinate means are to be us'd by Us, whatever Concurrent Qualifications are required of Us, towards the attainment of Everlasting Salvation, yet that whole great Work is principally owing to God's unmerited and unbounded Grace. That nothing might interfere with, or rob this free, infinite Love of God of any part of the Honour due to it, in contriving and carrying on, and perfecting the Salvation of Man, but that the first Proposition in the Text might still hold good, notwithstanding all the Subserving Attendance of Faith or Works, *By Grace ye are Sav'd.* *Through Faith* indeed immediately follows: but as the Promise of that Earthly Inheritance which was made to *Abraham*, as the Apostle tells us (Rom. 4. 16.) *was of Faith that it might be of Grace*: so our Eternal Inheritance which was prefigur'd and signify'd thereby, if it is, as we are here taught, *through Faith*, is so, that it also might be *by Grace*. For to take off the too high Opinion that some Men seem to have of Faith, we should understand that the very highest degree of it, even such as was in the Father of the Faithful himself, is far from being any Meritorious Cause of Justification.

Abraham

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*Abraham Believ'd and it was Counted to Him for Righteousness, Rom. 4. 3. and again, Faith was counted to Abraham for Righteousness. v. 9. It was reckon'd, it was counted to him For, therefore it was not Righteousness. So that as there is no Merit in Works, so neither is there in Faith; and tho' God does Justifie the Believing Man, it is not for the Worthiness of his Belief, but the Worthiness of him, in whom he Believes. In whom he Believes, and from whom alone it proceeds also that he does Believe. For let us give to Faith all the highest Elogies that are recorded of it, and very glorious things are spoken of it in the Book of God; Let us own all its Victories which are so triumphantly display'd in the 11th Chapter to the Hebrews, and what is greater than all those, what the same Apostle speaks of it in the Text, *Through it ye are sav'd*; yet that there may be no room for Doubt, but that Salvation is still entirely to be ascrib'd to Grace, we are at the same time taught that this Faith, instrumentally imploy'd in so great a Work, is it self of Grace, *It is not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God.**

Undoubtedly Faith, as Every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, who of his own Will begat us with the Word of Truth. James 1. 17, 18. That is, who has given us
in

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in his Word a full Revelation of the Truth, necessary by all to be Believ'd in Order to Eternal Life. And so far it is by all that ever call'd themselves Christians agreed, that Faith is the Gift of God. That is, Objectively consider'd, containing the things Reveal'd by God, and propos'd to be Believ'd by Man, tho' undiscoverable before the Revelation, by the most exalted Powers of Human Understanding. *Which neither Eye has seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive ; but God has reveal'd them to us by his Spirit.* So far, I say, even the *Pelagians* of Old, and the *Socinians* at this Day readily allow. But that there is any need of an Internal Operation of the Grace of God, any inward Motion of the Holy Ghost towards creating in us a Belief of these things, they as absolutely deny, arrogating to themselves a Natural Ability in themselves, without any Supernatural Assistance to Believe the Gospel. Against both these Ancient and modern Denyers of the Grace of God, we are constantly to maintain, that God the only giver of all good Gifts, gives us *Faith* also, the chiefest of all his Gifts, and *That* not only by Revealing the *Deep things of God, which none but the Spirit of God has ever searched out*, or discover'd and propos'd as the matter of Our Belief, but also by exciting

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citing in Us the Act of Believing, by Illuminating the Understanding that it may perceive, and enflaming the Will that it may heartily embrace the Truth. Briefly, not only by presenting the Object, but also by Enlightning the Subject of Belief. Accordingly we find St. Paul Praying in the behalf of his *Ephesians*, *That God would give them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Him.* Πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκάλυψιν. Not only a Spirit of Revelation to remove the Veil from off the Object, but a Spirit of Wisdom also to bring Light into the Eye of the Mind, that it may be fitted for the Reception of it. So that the beginning and progress and encrease and perfection of Faith is from the Spirit of God, that not only by an External proposal in the Word discovers to us the things of God, but also by an internal Operation in the Soul enables every Believer, both to Assent to them, tho' they are Foolishness to the Understanding, and to Love them, tho' they are Enmity to the Will of the Natural Man. For it is not with Religion as with Sciences purely Speculative, which only aim at an acquiescence of the Mind in the perception of the simple Truth of a Proposition, but the Scope of Divine Truth is more to *perswade* Men than to *convince* them, to attract their Wills rather than to force

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force their Understandings. And thus after having offer'd outward Motives of Credibility sufficient to create a Rational Assent, out of this Rational Assent to form a Christian Faith, which includes besides a bare Belief, a Complacency also and Delight in what it receives, is a further effect of the good Spirit of God evincing the goodness of the Gospel to such as are perswaded of the Truth of it, and rendring it *Worthy of all Acceptation to them* that own it a *Faithfull Saying*. We are therefore under the strongest Obligation both of Justice and Gratitude, to acknowledge (and if we have True Faith we cannot do otherwise) that it is not of *Ourselves* : *it is the Gift of God*. And a Gift of Inestimable Price it is, And of such Virtue and Power as nothing is able to withstand. *This is the Victory which Overcometh the World*, nay by this we are more than Conquerors, more than Conquerors of the World, for by This we encounter and withstand, we defeat and vanquish all the Subtily and Malice of our Spiritual Enemies, all the Wiles and Powers of Darknes and Hell. By this, which is yet a harder Victory, we subdue our selves, our own Fleshly Desires and Inordinate Lusts and Vicious Inclinations. In short, a true Faith works as great Wonders still, as our Saviour promis'd should follow them that Believe. *In my*

R

Name

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Name they shall cast out Devils, they shall take up Serpents, if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them, They shall lay hands on the Sick, and they shall recover. Where Faith really is, it casts out Devils still, the Spirit of Envy and of Pride, of Uncleanneſs and Revenge, every Foul and Evil Spirit that poſſeſſes Man. It works now as mighty things upon the Souls, as in the firſt and miraculous Age it did upon the Bodies of Men, If it does not indeed exert Works really more Miraculous, than thoſe viſibly perform'd by the firſt Believers. Such, as if they make leſs ſhew without, yet need as great, if not greater, Efficacy within to Effect them. Doubtleſs Sanctification, Juſtification, Salvation, all which are in a right Senſe aſcrib'd to Faith, are Arguments of as Divine a Power, as to caſt out Devils, or to heal the Sick, or to raiſe the Dead. Nay, if we may preſume to compare the Works of Omnipotence, how much harder ſeems it to inſpire Virtue into the Vicious Soul, than to breath the Breath of Life into a dead Carcaſs? To make the Children of the Devil become the Sons of God, than out of the Stones to raiſe up Children unto *Abraham*? To animate a Lump of Earth, is but to Determine to one Form, that Matter which is capable of any. To cure a Diſeaſe, or to caſt out a Devil, is but to remove an Unnatural Oppreſſion, a
weight

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weight that a Man labours under and groans to be discharg'd of. The Subject in these Cases, is purely passive, or else assistant and willing to contribute to the Effect. But the raising us up to a new Spiritual Life, the healing of the inward Sickness of the Soul, the dispossessing every Evil Spirit that had taken up its dwelling there, these Works are attended with no such favourable Circumstances : instead of a meer Inactivity, there is a warm and vigorous Resistance, instead of an inclination to comply with the change, an obstinate purpose to hinder and resist it ; An Opposition not to be overcome , but by as much or more of Virtue supernatural, than was requir'd to the Production of the most astonishing Wonders that were wrought, even by the Apostles, or by Christ himself. So much is imply'd in what our Saviour tells us, John. 14. 12. *He that Believes in me, the Works that I do he shall do also, and greater Works than these shall he do.* Every true Believer then doth not Work Miracles , yet somewhat greater it seems by the Grace of God and Faith in Christ, he performs. *Thanks therefore be unto God for This his unspeakable Gift!* fruitful in the production of such Glorious and Blessed Effects ! and chiefly of that most Blessed Effect of all, which as the Crown of its other Excellencies and Perfections, is here affirm'd of Faith in the Text,

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that *Through it ye are Sav'd*, which is the other thing that comes next to be consider'd;

2dly, *Ye are Sav'd through Faith*. That *We are Justify'd by Faith*, and that *He that Believeth shall be Sav'd*, can be no doubt to any one that Reads and Believes the Gospel, *the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that Believes*. Rom. 1. 16. This great and comfortable Truth is therein so plainly express'd, or so necessarily imply'd in places so many as were endless, so obvious as 'tis needless to repeat.

But what this Faith is, and in what manner it produces such admirable Effects, as are on all hands allow'd to be ascrib'd to it in Scripture, is the great Question and Subject of Debate.

But not to trouble you with Scholastick Niceties, by Faith ye may understand a deep and full perswasion of, and a Real and Cordial assent to, all Truth reveal'd in Scripture upon the account that it is the Word of God so Infinitely Wise, that he cannot be deceiv'd, and so Infinitely Good, that he cannot deceive. Which is so just a Foundation of Assurance, that Faith is therefore rightly describ'd by the Apostle, Hebr. 11. 1. *The Substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen*. By which is meant that a sound and firm Belief makes that, as it were

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were, Subſiſt, which yet is not; gives a preſent Exiſtence to things yet to come, ſets diſtant Futurities before the Eye of the Soul, and repreſents them as lively to the Enlighten'd Mind, as if they were before us expos'd naked to our Bodily Eye; giving them thereby the ſame Efficacy and Power to excite in us workings ſuitable to ſuch important Discoveries, as if what we are perſwaded certainly muſt be, actually were in Being, and now preſent in our View. And if this be the Nature of Faith, as from the Apoſtle's deſcription of it we may conclude it is, We need only to conſider what thoſe things are, which are thus reveal'd, and of what vaſt concern, what mighty importance to us, to learn in what manner ſuch a Belief of them, as has been deſcrib'd, ſhould Operate and be to us the Eſſeſſual Inſtrument in working out our Salvation. Certainly the Glorious and Gracious, the Awful and Terrible Objects of our Faith, are ſuch as cannot chooſe, if heartily Believ'd, and actually attended to, but produce in us ſuch apprehenſions of God and ourſelves as to engage us to *the perfecting of Holineſs in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. and if *we have our Fruit unto Holineſs*, we know *the End is Everlaſting Life*. Rom. 6. 22.

To illuſtrate this in ſome of the grand and moſt concerning Points of our Belief.

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He that firmly and stedfastly Believes, that the Soul that actuates this Body is an Immortal Being, a Subsistence which shall and must endure to Eternity; That after Death he must appear before the Tribunal of God and Christ, to answer for the things done in the Body, That from thence he shall be transmitted to a State either of Eternal Happiness, or Eternal Misery, either to be entertain'd in the Vision of God, in the Fellowship of Saints and Angels, with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, or excluded from the sight of God, and treated with the Devil and his Angels, with Torments unexpressible, Unconceivable, and that to all Eternity; This Man, thus actually Believing, if he might gain all the Profits, and Honours, and Pleasures, if he might decline all the Losses, Disgrace, and Afflictions of this World, will not lose his own Soul. Considering that light and momentary things bear no proportion to the exceeding Weight of those that are Eternal, he will forthwith endeavour to lay hold upon Eternal Life, and make haste to escape the Wrath to come.

He that is fully in his Mind perswaded, that there is an Omniscient and Omnipresent God, *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity* without infinite Detestation, yet necessarily seeing all whatever he does, who *is about his path, and about his bed, and spies out*
all

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all his ways, knows his down-sitting and his up-rising, and understands even his thoughts long before; He that in earnest believes this, will not dare in the innermost Recesses of his Heart to harbour any evil Thought, much less to commit any wicked Act, tho' under cover of the deepest Secresy, and impossible to be found out by any Mortal Sight: but will demean himself as ever in the Presence of his Judge, nor presume to affront him to his Face, and as the Prophet speaks, provoke the Eyes of his Glory.

He that believes, that the only Way to Happiness is the Way of Holiness; That *the Pure in Heart shall see God*, but that where He is, *No unclean thing shall enter there*; having this Fear of being excluded for ever from the Beatifick Presence, will *cleanse himself from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and having this Hope in Him of seeing God as he is, will purify himself even as He is pure.*

Again, He that believes and considers the Corruption and Impotence of his natural Condition, and the Design of Christ's Coming into the World: What he has already done, and what he is still doing for him: How that Himself, and every Man, is by Nature a *Child of Wrath*, that *Sin reigns in his mortal Body*, that he lies under a Bondage from which he cannot redeem, a Guilt from which he cannot acquit himself: That no

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Flesh is justify'd in the Sight of God ; Who-
 soever, I say , doth believe this concerning
 Himself , and on the other Side concerning
 Christ , *That for this End was he born , and
 for this Cause came he into the World that he
 might save Sinners, That the World thro' Him
 might be sav'd ;* That to this End , and to
 this End only , He came down from Hea-
 ven ; This was the End of his Conversation
 upon Earth , His Life and Doctrine , His
 Preaching and Example ; This was the End
 of his Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension
 and Session at the Right Hand of God ;
 That by the Sufferings of his Life , and the
 Inestimable Value of his Blood , the World
 might be justify'd and redeem'd from the
 Guilt of their Sins , and rescu'd from the
 Miseries of the World to come ; And that
 by the Operation of his Doctrine and Ex-
 ample , and the Power of his Intercession
 the World might be sanctify'd , deliver'd
 from the Dominion of Sin , purify'd and
 prepar'd to be admitted to the Vision of the
 most Holy God , and Fruition of the Life
 to come : I say , the Man that firmly , and
 stedfastly , and actually believes these things ,
 will not (nay indeed cannot) *neglect so great
 Salvation* : That He will not trample upon
 the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant , or
 despise the Spirit of Grace , or crucify afresh
 the Lord of Glory , and put him to an open
 Shame ;

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Shame; But that for his continual Cleansing from his past Transgressions, he will daily resort to the *Fountain* which Christ has open'd for Sin, and for Uncleanneſs, Zech. 13. 1. offering and presenting his Head and his Heart (his Mind and Affections) to the *Blood of Sprinkling*; and that for the obtaining of preventing and following Grace to preserve him from lapsing for the time to come, he will throw himself daily at the Feet of that High-Priest, who is sensible of his Infirmities, and who sits at God's Right Hand making Intercession for him, and with Sighs and unutterable Groans he will implore the Assistance of that Spirit, which *helpeth our Infirmities*; And that continuing and persevering in this Course (by the Grace of God, which never faileth them that seek him) he will certainly conform himself to the Commands of Christ, and compose himself to his Example, till at length he be transform'd into his Image; He will *add to his Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly Kindness; and to brotherly Kindness, Charity*; He will go on from *Strength, to Strength, untill he appear before God in Glory.*

I say, that whoever he is that from his Heart believes all these things, such a Man
by

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by denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lust, and Living Soberly, and Righteously, and Godly in this present World, will work out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and in the End of his Days, will certainly and infallibly receive the end of his Hopes, even the Salvation of his Soul.

And this I think sufficient, both to make good the Assertion of St. Paul in my Text, *That ye are Sav'd through Faith*, and also to shew in what manner, and by what means Faith conduces to so blessed an Effect. Namely, by presenting to our Hopes and Fears (the great Springs of all Human Actions) Arguments of such amazing Concern and infinite Moment, as duly weigh'd, and seriously attended to, must by a kind of Moral Necessity set all our Endeavours on work to the producing such an Obedience, as God for the sake of Christ, Believ'd in and Obey'd, will graciously accept and Crown with Everlasting Life.

By all which, it plainly appears what Justifying Faith, the Faith thro' which ye are Sav'd is, Namely, a *Faith working by Love*; A Sound, Real, and Steady Belief of those Sacred Truths, which are not matter of bare Speculation only, but of such a Nature in themselves, and of so great Concern to us, as being once clearly known and firmly assented to, must needs carry us out to Action;

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Action ; without which the Knowledge or Belief of them is of no worth, it is unacceptable to God, it is unprofitable to Men, it is Dead, *For as the Body without the Soul is Dead, so Faith without Works is Dead also.* James 2. 26.

Which brings me to the last Proposition to be handled, namely Good Works, *to which we are Created in Christ Jesus, and which God hath ordain'd that we should Walk in.*

III. And of these every Minister of the Gospel, as well as *Titus* to whom the Charge was particularly given by *St. Paul*, is oblig'd to *affirm constantly, that they who have Believ'd in God be careful to maintain them.* In obedience to which Apostolical Injunction, we are bold to lay it down for an uncontestable Truth, That Good Works, tho' not of so meritorious a dignity that we shall be Sav'd for them, yet are of such absolute necessity that we shall not be Sav'd without them.

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, is with great probability conceiv'd by Learned Men, to be One of the Chief of those things which *St. Peter* points at in his Brother *Paul's* Epistles, as *hard to be understood, which they that were Unlearned and Unstable Wrested to their own Destruction.* For even while the Apostles were yet alive, there arose Men
speaking

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speaking perverse things, and turning the Grace of God into Wantonness, who from some misunderstood Passages of St. Paul, us'd the Liberty, which he asserted for a Cloak of Maliciousness, made void that Faith, which he so earnestly contended for, by opposing it to the genuine Fruits that it should produce, and notwithstanding the clear obligation which the Gospel lays upon the Professors of it to all good Works, taught on the contrary, that it was a special Dispensation from the doing of any. And as those Opinions that gratify Men's Lusts are easily Believ'd and greedily Swallow'd, especially if there can be found any plausible covering for them under Scripture Expressions, this pernicious Doctrine has been propagated down thro' all Ages of the Church, even unto the Dregs of Time, into which we ourselves are fallen. And tho' nothing can be plainer in the Gospel, than that the whole design of it was to Teach us, that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, and Righteously, and Godly in this present World, and that the very End of Christ's giving himself for us, was, that he might Redeem us from all Iniquity, and Purify unto himself a People Zealous of good Works: We meet with those that instead of Conscientiously paying these Debts, have the impudence to deny them, even by audaciously appealing

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ing to the great Book of accompts, and affirm that they are already discharg'd by atonement of Another for them, and are not therefore now any longer owing.

Now if it be so disingenious an abuse (as we all know it is) of the kindness of Men to misconstrue their Words spoken in our favour, and put such an Extravagant Sense on them as was never intended, what is it to deal so with the Words of God? Instead of Blessing his Name for so gracious a Promise, that for the Merit of his Son's perfect Obedience, he will accept of the Sincere, tho' Imperfect Obedience of every one that by Faith lays hold on him, to pretend that laying hold of Christ by Faith, is all that he requires to the Justification of a Sinner.

This was far from St. *Paul's* intention, as by his Mind plainly declar'd in several Places of his Epistles, particularly those but just now produc'd out of that to *Titus*, sufficiently appears. When therefore in his discourse concerning Justification, he opposes Faith to Works, Excluding the One that he may Establish the Other, by Works he either means the Ceremonial Works of the Law, or Works perform'd by the meer strength of Nature, unassisted by Grace; for he cannot possibly mean, Works following Faith and done by Faith, Works proceeding from the Gift of God, and produc'd by

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us when new Creatures in Christ ; for our Justification or Condemnation in the Day of Judgment, will be according to our having fulfill'd or neglected those Works , as he himself teaches us, 2 *Cor.* 5. 10, and our Saviour in the 25th Chapter of *Mat.* v. 35, more at large and most lively sets forth; In short, *The Works of the Law*, or barely *Works* he always excludes, but *Good Works* he ever enjoins: For this is a remarkable difference that has been very well observ'd in his Style. *Works* (that is, such as a Moral Heathen may produce, which tho' never so specious, yet being without Faith, can never please God , or the *Works of the Law* Ceremonial, which consider'd in themselves, have nothing of Goodness or Holiness in them,) are in St. *Paul's* language quite different from the Works which the Gospel prescribes, which are in their own Nature really and intrinsically Just, Holy and Profitable , and therefore peculiarly and deservedly come under the Name of *Good Works*. And these are so far from being opposite to , that they are Naturally produc'd by , and necessarily included in, a Justifying Faith: and accordingly of These St. *James* pronounces as a thing Notorious and Evident, *Ye see that Man is Justify'd by Works, and not by Faith only.* In which Assertion whatever seeming difference

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ference there may be in Sound, there is no real Contradiction in Sense, to that of *St. Paul, That Man is Justify'd by Faith only, and not by the Works of the Law*; which will easily be made appear to any One, that will consider the different Occasions of writing, and the different Sorts of Persons, to which these two Apostles apply'd themselves in their several Epistles. *St. Paul* against the *Jews*, who would have made the *Mosaical* Rites still obligatory to *Christians*, truly teaches and strongly presses, that Faith in Christ, provided it bring forth the genuine and proper Fruit of Christian Faith, good Works, is sufficient to their Justification, without the Works of the Law. *St. James* against Libertines, Hereticks, who went about to destroy all the Morality of our Saviour's most holy Religion, by pretending, that Faith without good Works was sufficient to Salvation, as truly declares and as zealously urges, that Faith, unless it do produce Good Works, can by no means justify or save. So that these two great Apostles no more contradict each Other, than the Doctrine of Grace contradicts the Doctrine of Sanctification. Notwithstanding all this, there are those, whom the Spirit, that works in the Children of Disobedience, insatuates to that degree, as to pronounce good Works not only unnecessary to Salvation,

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vation, as some, but even pernicious, as others, have dar'd to Blaspheme: To assert that a strong Assurance, a confident Relying and familiar Resting upon Christ, is all that is requir'd to Saintship here, and Salvation hereafter. Dividing Christ's Offices, willingly enough they would use him as their Priest, but care not to obey him as their King. Not considering what St. Peter and the other Apostles taught, Acts 5. 31. *Him has God exalted to be a Prince, and a Saviour*, a Prince, to give Laws to be submitted to by Obedience, as well as a Saviour, to procure Redemption to be embrac'd by Faith.

But these, it seems, that are more intimate with Christ, are not ty'd to the Observance of the Moral Law; for St. Paul has in several Places told them, that the Faithful *are freed from the Law, are dead to the Law, are no longer under the Law*, and such like Expressions, which these *unlearned* and presumptuous Wretches wrest, *as they do other Scriptures, to their own Destruction*. Not rightly understanding, or not duly attending to this plain Distinction, that will clear up all this Difficulty; namely that the Law in Scripture, is sometimes consider'd as a Covenant, and sometimes as a Rule; when 'tis spoken of as abrogated, it is taken as a Covenant of Works, but when 'tis urg'd as
still

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still in force 'tis consider'd as a Rule of Life. So Christ has freed us from the Curse of the Law as it was a Covenant of Works, but stronglier enforc'd the Obedience of the Law as it is a Rule of Life. For as a Covenant, 'twas rigorous and condemning, *Do this and Live, Fail in one Tittle and Die!* and that Rigour and Condemnation Christ has taken away; but as a Rule, it was equal and holy and just and good, and that Equity and Holiness and Justice and Goodness he has by no means taken away, he has rather establish'd and confirm'd. *Think not*, says he, *that I am come to destroy the Law, I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it*; and St. Paul, *Do we then make void the Law by Faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the Law.* In fine, the Duties of the Moral Law being such as are not Good because commanded, but commanded because Good, are of indispensable and never-ceasing Obligation, so exactly conformable to the Eternal Rectitude and Immutable Holiness of God, the Copy not only of his Will, but his Nature, that it is as impossible that God should ever abrogate or dispense with these, as it is that he should deny himself.

They who run down this as Legal Preaching, and as the more Evangelical Way lay themselves out in exhorting their Hearers to get Christ, to rouse and cast themselves upon

S. Christ,

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Christ, one would almost think had discover'd some Other *Christ*, than the Gospel speaks of. His Doctrine was of a different Form and Tendency. In his first Divine Discourse on the Mount, he professes, as ye heard, that *he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.* Not to cancel any Part of our Duty towards God or Man, but to advance it to a higher Degree of Perfection, and by more terrible Threatnings and more precious Promises to enforce the Obligation to it. His whole Sermon is of Holiness and Happiness, of the several Kinds of good Works to be done, and the several respective Blessings that attend the doing of them. In short, the whole Design of his Religion is to promote good Works, and according to them he assures us, that he will *judge the World.* According to them shall be pronounc'd the Irreversible Sentence, *Go ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, or Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World.* Holiness then is the Condition upon which all our future Happiness depends, and as the Law of God, as was before hinted, is not the arbitrary Declaration of his Will, but a Sample of his Essential Goodness, the Image and Reflexion of his Divine Nature; so this Allotment of Happiness to the Conformity to that Law, in which Conformity our Ho-
liness

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happiness consists, is not a positive only and merely arbitrary Appointment, but grounded on the unchangeable Respect of things, the rational and eternal Agreement that is between the One and the Other. For were it possible, that an unholy Person could be admitted there, even Heaven it self could not make him Happy. For Happiness consists in the Enjoyment of an Object suitable and satisfying to our Desires ; nor can God, the Holy God, be our Felicity, unless we in some Measure partake of his Nature, and are transformed into his Likeness.

By this time the absolute Necessity of Good Works may plainly appear, not indeed as meritorious Causes of Salvation, but yet as requisite Qualifications, in every One that shall be sav'd. They are not *Causæ Regnandi*, but they are *Via ad Regnum*, as the Father expresses it, not the Causes for which the Heavenly Kingdom is by Right due, but the Way through which every One that seeks to enter into that Kingdom must necessarily pass.

The Merit of them in my last Discourse on this Text was utterly renounc'd, and, I think, sufficiently confuted from several Arguments not to be repeated. I shall only now add, That since 'tis on all hands allow'd, that we cannot without Grace perform any good Work, the better our Works

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are, and the more of them we do, the more still we are indebted to him that enables us to work; and as our Debt to him increases, so our Title to merit any thing at his hands must proportionably without doubt decrease. But let not this in the least slacken our Endeavours, or abate our Hopes. Tho' we cannot in strict Justice claim any Reward, His Goodness will crown our Endeavours, and exceed our Hopes. God is not, cannot be a Debtor to the Holiest of his Creatures; but to Himself he is, to his Own Inviolable Truth, whereby he stands voluntarily oblig'd to repay even inconsiderable Services, (if perform'd in Belief of his *Promise and Obedience to his Command*,) with an *Eternal Weight of Glory*. As we therefore expect to be Sav'd by Grace, all our Works must be done in Faith, without which it is *impossible to please God*. For we may safely invert the Words of St. *James*, and as He speaks of Faith without Works, so may we say of the best Works, that *as the Body without the Soul is dead, so without Faith they are dead also*. For Faith alone it is that animates and gives Life unto them, by directing their first Intention to its proper End, by doing 'em for the Love of Christ and to his Father's Glory, by teaching us to expect the Acceptation of their Imperfection for the sake of his Perfect Righteous-

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Righteousness, by minding us from whom they spring, and to whom all the Goodness in them is to be ascrib'd, by setting a right Value upon 'em, and lastly by assuring us of as certain a Reward to them from his gracious Promise, as if they had merited it from their own Intrinsick Worth. Let us therefore by the *Grace* of God, through Faith, heartily set about these Works that accompany Salvation. Let none so rely upon God's Electing Grace, as to disregard his Sanctifying Grace, which is absolutely Necessary to make that presum'd Election sure. 'Tis a mortal Delusion for any to think Electing Mercy will bring him to Glory, if he continue in Sin, or that he can reap any Benefit through Christ's Death by Faith, without Conformity to his Life by Obedience. Let us not flatter and cheat Ourselves with the fond Opinion of Our being predestinated to Eternal Life, by an Irreversible Designation of the Secret Will of God, except we be studious and careful to perform that Will of his, which he has reveal'd. Let us not trouble our heads with the Order of God's Councils, nor presumptuously take upon us to range, after this or that Manner and Method, his Decrees, among which in reality there is neither Priority nor Subsequence, fore nor after, being all One simple, uncompounded, Eternal Act

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of the Divine Wisdom and Will. Hear what Moses says to God's own chosen People *Israel*, *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things that are reveal'd belong unto us and to our Children for ever, that we may do all the Words of this Law*, Deut. 29. 29. It is sufficient for us to know, that God has ordain'd none to the End, but those to whom he hath ordain'd the Means; that none are *save'd through Faith*, but those who are *created in Christ Jesus to Good Works*. Let us remember always, that we are call'd to be *Saints* as well as *Believers*, and consider that it is as possible to be *Believers* without *Faith*, as *Saints* without *Holiness*. And withal that to be the One is as absolutely Necessary as the Other; since by the same infallible Word, by which we are taught, that *he that Believeth shall be saved*, by the same also we are assur'd, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which has lov'd us and given us Everlasting Consolation and good Hope thro' Grace, comfort our Hearts, and encrease our Faith, and stablish us in every good Word and Work. To Him be Glory for Ever and Ever. Amen.

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ROM. X. 15.

*How shall They Preach except
They be Sent ?*

IF at any Time since the First Preaching of the Gospel, it were allowable for a Minister of Christ to assert the High Dignity of His Calling, and with the Holy Apostle St. Paul to magnify His Office; Surely it is so, and more than so at this Day. If in any Age it was Seasonable, in this it is Necessary. An Age wherein we have seen, between an Atheistical Company of formal Pretenders to Philosophy and Reason on one Hand, and a giddy, senseless Crew, who are call'd Wits by the same Propriety of Speech that the former are called Deists on the Other, the whole Dispensation of the Gospel of Christ, the Wisdom

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dom and Power of God to Salvation, ridicul'd and despis'd as an Absurd and Irrational Imposition upon their Understandings, or a Trick or Cheat to enslave their Wills, an Affront to their Reason, or a Design upon their Liberty. Between the grave Arguers against Mystery and the lewd Drollers upon Priest-Craft, the great Masters of Reason and the little Slaves of Sense, all Esteem and Reverence due to Persons or Things never so Sacred or Divine, is almost exploded and laugh'd out of the World. Which tho' none, that have any regard to the common Faith, can chuse but seriously lament, yet we can't but have some Satisfaction to perceive, that all the while that they mean so much despight to Our Religion, they do but the more confirm Our Faith, in so plainly verifying the Predictions of Those who first preach'd that Gospel which they Thus despise. For that the latter Days shall be times of Infidelity and Departure from the Faith, that there shall be Scoffers at the Gospel, and Mockers walking after their Own Ungodly Lusts, we have the assurance of the Apostles, *St. Paul*, *St. Peter*, and *St. Jude*. Since therefore these things have been foretold by the unerring Spirit of God, we know that Offences must come, but *Wo unto Them by whom they come!* Yea, *Wo unto Them* who do not use Their
utmost

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utmost Endeavour to put a stop to their farther Encrease and Progreſs when they do come! Which being a Duty incumbent upon Us eſpecially, who have the Honour to be thus deſpis'd for Our Maſter's ſake; I ſhall, by God's Grace, endeavour ſomewhat towards it, by ſhewing how Sacred our Authority is, *For He, The Prieſt, is the Meſſenger of the Lord of Hoſts.*

And as the Prieſt under the Law, was in the Prophet's Language *The Meſſenger of the Lord of Hoſts*, ſo in that of the Apoſtles, every Lawful Preacher of the Goſpel is an *Ambaſſador of Jeſus Chriſt*. This was then and is now, that which only can make Authentick and Valid every Miniſterial Act, both of the One and the Other, which otherwiſe is both Injurious to God and Uſeleſs to the People. Of the firſt we hear God complaining by his Prophet (Jer. 23. 21.) *I have not ſent and yet they ran, I have not ſpoken to Them and yet they Propheſy'd.* And of the ſecond the Apoſtle demanding, *How can they Preach unleſs they are Sent?* Our Church therefore in her 23^d Article declares, that *It is not lawful for any Man to take upon him the Office of publick Preaching or Miniſtring the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully Call'd and Sent to Execute the ſame; A thing ſo plainly contain'd and ſo often inculcated in Holy Scripture, and withal ſo agreeable*

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agreeable to sound Reason and good Sense, that tho' it may not seem very strange, that the frantick Enthusiast, the Man of new Light or wild Inspiration should despise it; yet that the sober Socinian, the great pretender to Right Reason and True Judgment should peremptorily and Dogmatically deny any need at all of it, were enough to raise any Ones wonder, that is not well enough acquainted with that sort of Men to have learnt that as there is nothing so plain in Scripture, that they have not the Art of perverting, or the Boldness of out-facing; so when Reason too is as much against Them, according to the Observation of Mr. *Hobbes*, (as good a Christian) *they can be as much against Reason.* I shall therefore

I. Shew the necessity from Scripture and the Expediency from Reason of Such a Mission in General, and consider Briefly the Socinian Arguments against it.

II. Assert our own Mission in Particular, and Justify the Sacred Authority, by which our Holy Mother the *Church of England* has sent us forth into Christ's Vineyard.

I begin with the first. The Necessity in general for a Call and Commission from God, in order to exercise the Ministerial Office as it is evidently set forth in Scripture.
Where

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Where, if to rise so high as the Patriarchal Age, Even in *that* there are visible footsteps of a Divinely instituted Priesthood, or of Representatives impower'd by God to intercede between Him and his Creatures, to send Up Prayers for them to Him, and to bring Down Blessings to them from Him; Instances of both which parts of the Priestly Office, namely, Intercession with God, and Blessing and Cursing in his Name, we find long before the time of the Levitical Institution; of the first in the story of *Abraham* and *Abimelech*, Gen. 20. Where tho' *Abimelech* has the Testimony of so good a Man, as to have the singular Grace of God's appearance to Him, who also for the Integrity of his Heart had withheld Him from Sinning against Him, yet He receives at the same time a Command from God, for the saving of his Life, to procure *Abraham* to Pray for Him, *For He is a Prophet, saith God, and He shall Pray for thee, and thou shalt Live!* So *Abraham* pray'd unto God, and God healed *Abimelech*. And again, in God's sending *Job's* three Friends to Him to make Reconciliation for them, *Therefore take unto You now seven Rams and go to my Servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a Burnt-offering, and my Servant Job shall pray for You, for him will I accept.* Instances of the second (*i. e.*) of God's dispensing His Blessings and Cursings by the Ministry

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Ministry of Men, we have in *Noah's Blessing Shem* and *Cursing Canaan*, in *Isaac Blessing Jacob* and *Rejecting Esau*, and in *Jacob's* most remarkable and solemn Blessing of the Twelve Patriarchs. For tho' every Man may in some sense Bless another, so far as praying for the Blessing of God upon him may be so call'd, yet solemnly to pronounce a Blessing in the Name of the Lord, is an Act of Authority, and cannot be done so as to have any force or validity without a Commission from God. And that these Blessings and Cursings, which I have mention'd, were of such a Nature, the Event and Notorious Verification and Ratifying of 'em by God sufficiently argues, and is also further confirm'd, because that being once pronounc'd they were irrecoverable: which particularly appears in that of *Isaac*, who tho' impos'd upon by the younger Brother, who had come by Subtilty and taken away the Blessing, yet could not recall it; But *Esau* was finally rejected, and could find no place of Repentance tho' he sought it carefully with Tears. Which plainly shews, that his Father reckon'd not the Blessing that he had bestow'd to be given in his Own Name or Authority, but that it was a Ministerial Act, and as such, having been once Executed, was not in his Power to alter or reverse. But to stay no longer in the darker times that preceded the Law; let

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let us come to the Legal Priesthood ; in the account of which we may find plainly and expressly related, how it pleas'd Almighty God to Choose and Sanctify one only Tribe, the Tribe of *Levi*, out of all the other Twelve to Minister to Himself, and out of that Tribe One only Family, to the highest Sacerdotal Dignity. *He exalted Aaron, and gave him the Priesthood among the People ; He chose him out of all Men living to offer Sacrifices to the Lord, and to make Reconciliation for his People.* Eccclus 45. 6, 7. 16. There we may see the several distinct Employments and different Charges allotted to them ; how the *Levites* were in all their Service at the appointment and direction of the Sons of *Aaron*, They subject to the Principal Guides and Leaders of their own Order, and they all under Obedience to the High - Priest. There we may read, with what August Solemnities they were publickly admitted to their Holy Functions. How God beautify'd *Aaron* with comely Ornaments, and cloathed him with a Robe of Glory, with a Breast-plate of Judgment, and with *Urim* and *Thummim*, such as before him was none ; neither did ever any Stranger put them on, but only his Children and his Children's Children perpetually. How *Moses* consecrated him, and anointed him with Holy Oyl ; How this was appointed to him by an Everlasting Covenant, and to his Seed, that they should

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*should minister unto God, and execute the Office of the Priesthood, and bless the People in his Name, as the Son of Sirach describes it (Eccles 45.) And as this divine Institution, so plainly set forth, was a sufficient Warrant; (and nothing else could be so) for all the Ministerial Acts which every One in their several Orders perform'd; so the severe Punishments which God inflicted upon any that presum'd to invade the Office, to which they were not call'd, or with Sacrilegious Hands to touch those Holy things, that appertain'd only to the High-Priest, abundantly witness; how jealous God was of this his Own Holy Sanction. Out of the many Instances of this Nature in the Old Testament, I shall mention but Two, the most remarkable for the Quality of their Persons, their Crime and Punishment. Nothing can be more terrible than the Vengeance, which was executed upon *Dathan* and *Abiram*; and what was their Crime, but that being only *Levites*, they aspired to the Priestly Office. Let us hear *Moses* expostulating with them, and aggravating their Offence from the Dignity that they were already invested with, *Seemeth it but a small thing to you, that the God of Israel has separated you from the Congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the Service of the Tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the Congregation, to minister**

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minister unto them? And he hath brought thee
*near to Him, and all thy Brethren the Sons of
 Levi with thee: and seek ye the Priesthood also?*
 (Numb. 16. 9, 10.) This was so prodigious,
 so unheard of a Provocation, that God also,
 as the Text speaks (v. 30, &c.) *made a New
 thing to punish it. And the Earth open'd her
 Mouth, and swallow'd them up, with all that
 appertain'd to them: and they went down quick
 into the Pit, and the Earth clos'd upon them.
 And there came out a Fire from the Lord, and
 consumed the two hundred and fifty Men that
 offer'd Incense with them. And in after-times,
 when Uzziah, otherwise a good and reli-
 gious and so long, a prosperous and victo-
 rious King, forgetful of this terrible Work
 of the Lord, waxed proud and took upon
 Him the Priestly Office, and went into the
 Temple of the Lord to burn Incense upon the
 Altar of Incense, His Heart, as it is there said
 was lifted up to His Destruction; for in that
 very act of Presumption, while he had the
 Censor in his hand to burn Incense, and was
 wroth with the Priests, who would have pre-
 vented his Sacrilege, he was smitten with a
 Leprosy, and was a Leper to his Death, and
 was cut off from the house of the Lord. These
 remarkable Judgments, what do they else
 but proclaim aloud from Heaven, how
 great an Impiety it is for any Person, of
 what degree or qualification soever, with-
 out*

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out being lawfully call'd and appointed by God himself, to assume so sacred an Employment, as to Minister at his Altar, without *being ordained for Men in things pertaining to God*, to take upon him to transact between God and his People!

But some are willing to except against these Instances, as being such, as were under a different Oeconomy of Religion, in which God was more tender of the outside and Ceremonious part of his Worship, and consequently not directly pertinent to Ours; and it has been argu'd to elude the force of what they are produc'd for, that the Priests of the Old Testament, being Types of Christ our High-Priest, were for that only reason to be so solemnly call'd and consecrated, by their Consecration to signify and prefigure the Inauguration of Christ to his Eternal Priesthood, and that therefore, under the Gospel, there is no farther Use or Necessity of such a Visible Ordination to the Ministry. But both these are weak Evasions; For first, all Prophana-tion in general of Things sacred, absolutely and without any other Circumstances consider'd, is a Sin against the Eternal Law of Nature, besides which there may also be in the same act a particular Offence against a Positive Temporary Institution; and as to the *Levitical* Consecration, tho' That, as
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to the peculiar Rites of it, was Ceremonial, and as to One special End of it was Typical, yet as to the Substance of it, it was Moral, and founded upon the Immutable Law of Nature and Reason, inasmuch as it was a Dedication to so August and Holy an Office, as that to which they were by it consecrated and set apart. And the Evangelical Ministry being no way Inferior to That, but in Dignity infinitely surpassing it (as much as *Christ* is greater than *Moses*, or Heaven better than the Land of *Canaan*) it is every whit as reasonable, that They, who were to be employ'd in That, should have as solemn a Call, as distinguishing a Separation and Sanctification to it, as the Other had to the Levitical Ministration of old; tho' not by the same Ceremonies, none of which were material, but as they were commanded, and some of 'em being Typical, were to cease of course and vanish, yet according to the Institutions which *Christ* himself in his Gospel deliver'd, and to which the Christian Church is as indispensably oblig'd in all things to conform, as the Jewish was to the *Patern in the Mount*.

To come therefore to that which is our sole Aim and main Concern, namely, the Ministry of the Gospel, we shall soon discover, *That no Man taketh this Honour nei-*
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ther to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron, as we are taught by the Author of the *Hebrews*, who has illustrated the Old Testament by the New and confirm'd the New by the Old. And the first and most unanswerable Proof of this is, that our High Priest himself, from whom all our Claim is deriv'd did not. For *Christ* also glorify'd not Himself, to be made an High Priest: but he that said unto him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech.* if therefore This was too great an Honour for *Christ* Himself to take upon Him without an Express Commission from God, if it was necessary to qualify Him for this Glorious Office, that he was to answer both his Prophetical Names, and be the *Shiloh* as well as the *Messias*, the *Sent* as well as *Anointed of God*; Can it be less than Blasphemy to imagin, that any other Person whatever, tho' never so well furnish'd with Gifts or Graces, without a like Commission from Him, can take upon him to represent his Person, or exercise with effect any Spiritual Office in His Name? No surely; and Glory be to Him for it, our Gracious High Priest has taken greater Care of his Church. He who was the first and chief Apostle and Bishop of our Souls, *Sent* by the Father, and *Anointed* by the Holy Ghost, by that
Mission

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Mission having receiv'd *Authority*, as by that *Unction* he receiv'd *Ability* for this High Employment in Person: while he liv'd upon the Earth (that he might not leave the World without providing for his Flock those, that should feed and govern it in his Absence till his second Coming) chose out certain Persons for this Very Purpose, to whom he imparted his Authority, by making them Partakers of his Mission just before his Ascension, in these words, *As my Father sent me, so I send you*; and his Ability, by making them Partakers also of his *Unction*, by the sending of the Holy Ghost upon them soon after it. But here it is to be observ'd, that as soon as ever our Blessed Lord had pronounc'd that Commission, *as my Father sent me, so I send you*, and breath'd upon them, and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, which was the first Act of his Mediatorial Office after that *all Power was given unto him in Heaven and in Earth*, (Mat. 28. 18.) by this outward significant Action, and these operative and effectual Words, they were invested with all the Authority that they could have, and receiv'd *Power* too, *sufficient* for the Execution of All that part of their Office which was Ordinary, and was to continue for ever in the Church, when gather'd, tho' they were commanded to wait a while for the more extraordi-

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nary Power, which was necessary to the Gathering of it: such as was the Gift of Tongues, the Working of Miracles, Prophecy, and the like, which they receiv'd not till the more plenteous Effusion of the Spirit on the day of *Pentecost*. The Holy Ghost then indeed came *upon them*, in a more stupendious manner, *like a rushing Mighty Wind*, to enable them for such great and astonishing Works; but for the constant and orderly and lasting, the still tho' no less effectual Work of the Ministry, which was never to cease from the Church, they were enough enabled, when He came *into them* by the gentle Breathing of our Lord. And This Authority, which was of standing Use and for ever Necessary, was not for that reason to expire with them; and therefore with it they receiv'd Power also of conferring it upon Others, and they also on Others Successively for ever, according to our Saviour's Promise, *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, and lo I am with you always to the end of the World*, Mat. 28. 20. And it is manifest, that they actually exercis'd this Power, which they receiv'd. And St. Paul afterwards, who had the same Power given him by our Saviour from Heaven, which the rest of the Apostles receiv'd from Him on Earth, as he sent *Timothy* and *Titus*, so he gave Them Power to send Others also;

as

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as is plain by his saying to the One, *Lay hands suddenly on No Man*; and to the Other, *For this Cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain Elders in every City, as I appointed thee.* And all this the Apostles did by the Power of the Holy Ghost given them by *Christ*, by which, as they were enabled to perform personally their Apostolical Functions, so they were impower'd also to ordain others to the same, whose Office therefore, as *Theirs* was, is also from the Holy Ghost. Which *St. Paul* Himself shews, speaking to the Elders of *Ephesus*, to whom, tho' they were certainly ordain'd by some of the Apostles, probably by Himself, yet his charge is, *Take ye heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God* (Acts 20. 28.) And thus, as under the Law there was a successive Priesthood continued by a Carnal Propagation, and by a Natural Descent they were to proceed Out of *Aaron's* Loyns, who were to Succeed in his Office; So now, after that *Christ* Our High-Priest is made a *Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedech* (who was without Father, without Mother, without Descent) That Carnal Propagation justly ceasing; thro' the Virrue of the Holy Spirit convey'd by Apostolical Ordination, there is a never ceasing.

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uninterrupted Ministerial Succession Spiritually propagated to the end of the World.

Thus have we briefly out of Holy Scripture shewn the Source and Fountain of all that Authority, which the Ministers of the Gospel are endued with, which is no other than the Commission of *Christ* himself, and the Power of his Spirit given to his Apostles, and thro' them and their Successors, as thro' so many living Channels, derived down in a direct Course to the Church in this present Age. And if we consider the whole Compass, and Extent, and the several important Changes of so High an Office, we shall see the Reasonableness as well as the Truth of all this, we shall perceive not only that it is so, but that it is absolutely Necessary that it should be so. Indeed the want of a due Consideration, or worthy Esteem of all those several and distinct Acts, so Excellent and Divine, about which their Ministry is conversant, is the great or rather only cause why any have doubted or argued against the Necessity of a Divine Mission, as will plainly appear to any One, that examines what either the *Enthusiasts* or *Socinians* (or *Limborch* out of them) oppose against it. Now it is confessedly the Duty of a Minister of *Christ*, as on the Part of the People, to offer up their Prayers to God; so on God's Part, to Sign and Seal the pardon

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don of their Sins to them, and Bless them in his Name. And as no Man can (for another Man like himself, without being legally commission'd by him,) seal Covenants in his Name; much less can any One take upon him to put the Seals, which are the Sacraments instituted by Christ, to the New Covenant, without his express Warrant and Commission. Such a Proceeding between Man and Man is Forgery, between Subject and Prince is Treason; but between Man and God is Sacrilege, is Blasphemy, is an Impiety beyond what Thought can reach, or Words express. The whole Employment of a Minister of the Gospel is not Only to Preach the Gospel, tho' that indeed in Scripture is sometimes by a Synecdoche taken for the whole Office of the Ministry. For that was a Glorious and Audacious Work, when the Commission for it was first given, and is so still, and ever shall be to the end of the World; but even then, when Certainly it was more necessary than it can be now, after near Seventeen hundred Years Possession that the Christian Faith has had over the whole Earth, even then it was but a part of the Commission, and preparatory also to the other parts of it. Let us put together what at several times, and on several occasions Our Saviour has given in Command to his Apostles, *Feed My Sheep, Teach all Nations,*

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Baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Do This in Remembrance of Me, Whosoever Sins ye remit they are remitted, and whosoever Sins ye retain they are retained. These are no Mortal sounds, *Nec Vox Hominem Sonat!* No, they are his, whose most inward Affairs they his chosen Ambassadors were to manage, even the Lord *Christ's*; by Virtue of which the Evangelical Ministry translates out of Darkness into God's marvellous Light, raiseth Men from the Earth, and brings God from Heaven; by Blessing Visible Elements makes 'em become Invisible Grace, disposes of that Body which was given for the Life of the World, and that Blood which was poured out to redeem Souls; whatever it binds on Earth is bound in Heaven, and whatever it looses on Earth is loos'd in Heaven; when it sheds Malediction on the Heads of the Wicked they Perish, and when it revokes the same they revive! What dullness is it not to admire, what prophaneness not to revere so great an Authority! What stupidity to think, that any but God can give it! It is He, and none but He! as St. *John* the Baptist, who was himself a Man sent from God to the same purpose, speaks, *A Man can take unto Himself nothing, except it be given him from Heaven,* (Joh. 3. 27.) We have for the least and meanest

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meanest Duties perform'd by Virtue of Ministerial Power, That to Dignify, Grace, and Authorize them, which no other Offices on Earth can challenge; so that whether we Preach, Pray, Baptize, Celebrate the Eucharist, Condemn, Absolve, or whatever we do as Disposers of God's Mysteries, Our Words, Judgments, Acts; and Deeds are not Ours, but the Holy Ghost's! Glory be to God, who has given such Power to Men! For to Men, weak, simple, sinful Men was, and is, this high Power conferr'd, which even Angels themselves, tho' in other things Ministring Spirits to the Church, cannot exercise. Thus we find, that when devout *Cornelius's* Prayers and Alms were come up to Heaven, and brought down an Angel from thence, all he could do towards admitting him into the Church was, to command him to send to *Joppa* for *Peter*: By His Preaching he was Instructed, Converted, Receiv'd the Holy Ghost, and was Baptiz'd. Who then shall undertake to exercise such a Power without a special Commission, which even an Angel from Heaven was not sufficient for? And who can but with the highest Gratitude and unspeakable Joy acknowledge God's Infinite Goodness and Condescension, who in pity to the weakness of our Nature has order'd, that all the Sovereign Medicines of Grace should be
 apply'd

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apply'd to us by the intermediate Office of Men! Men of like Infirmities and Passions with Ourselves, who have *this Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, as *St. Paul* speaks, *that still the Excellency of the Power may be of God and not of Us!*

Besides, as it was necessary in respect of the great Ends and Heavenly Purposes, that have been Mention'd, that this Power should be Originally from God, so very fit and congruous also was it, that it should be mediately by Men, to the end that it might be Openly and Visibly conferr'd. For no inward Call, tho' never so importunate, no Pretence to a Private Mission from the Spirit, no Measure of real Knowledge, or Wisdom, or Gifts, or Sanctity can excuse, much less authorize the assuming of this Character, without being legally call'd and outwardly sent from those who have been in like manner Legally, and Openly, and Solemnly impower'd to Call and Send. For if this were allow'd, what a door would it open to all the Enthusiasm, and Folly, and Madness, and Blasphemy in the World! and what is more Horrible, all these would be Father'd upon the Holy Spirit by whoever was Wicked, or Impudent, or Distracted enough to give Out he was Sent by him. Therefore Christ himself took not on him the Office of a Preacher, till he was Outwardly commissioned to it.

We

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We were told before by the Apostle, *That he Glorify'd not himself to be a High-Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.* This was in Heaven the Eternal Designation of him to the Priesthood in the secret Council of God. But the Publick Commission, which he receiv'd in Time, was the Voice from Heaven, *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;* and till publickly own'd by the Audible Voice of the Almighty Father, and the Visible Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Son himself enter'd not upon his Ministerial Office, *But from that Time Jesus began to Preach,* Mat. 4. 17. And St. Luke tells us he was then *about Thirty Years of Age;* and sure none can doubt of His being Qualify'd long before, both for Sanctity and Wisdom, who from his very Birth was the *Holy Child Jesus*, and at Twelve Years old disputed with the Doctors in the Temple, *so that all that heard him were astonish'd at his Understanding and Answers,* Luke 2. 46. And as Christ did not take this honour to himself, till *Outwardly call'd, as was Aaron,* so did he not leave it to the inward Call of any of his Disciples, to make themselves Apostles. But he first Openly call'd and chose by Name Twelve, whom he ordain'd to that high Office, and after chose Seventy others into an inferior Degree, their Commission to Preach and to Baptize

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Baptize was the same, which the Apostles themselves had. And 'tis notorious, that the Apostles after his Ascension, as the Encrease of the Church requir'd, chose others; and after Fasting and Prayer and solemn Imposition of hands, sent 'em forth to exercise the several Powers they had receiv'd; and by such an outward Ordination, Regularly and Lineally continu'd, has the same Commission, which they receiv'd from *Christ*, descended to Us, and our Lord's Promise been exactly Verify'd, that *he would be with them*, which could no otherwise possibly be, but by their lawful Successors, *to the End of the World*. And if these things be so, Is it not a deplorable thing to consider the slight Regard that is had among some to this Mission, which both Scripture, Antiquity and Reason tell us is so necessary to the very Being of a Church? Is it not a matter of just Indignation to find Men in defiance of this carnal Ordinance, as they call it, venting their own absurd Whimsies, and execrable Blasphemies, under the pretence of new Light and immediate Impulses of the Spirit? And is it not a matter of as just Pity to see a poor Company of deluded, or rather bewitched Wretches following eagerly and dancing after this false Light, till they drop at last into the bottomless Pit! And among others, that pretend to be somewhat more

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in their Wits, we find that a good Assurance, a voluble Tongue, and especially an irreverent Contempt of the Only Power that can Authorize to Teach, is enough to set up a Teacher! That if a Man has but the knack of Haranguing the People plausibly, has an Edifying Powerful way with him, and a great stock of Gifts, he may, without the low formality of being *Call'd* or *Sent* by any but himself, mount the Pulpit and Dispense; which is just as reasonable as it had been under the Law, when it was one part of the Ministerial Office to Kill, to Cut up, and Divide the Sacrifice, that any one that took himself for a more Dextrous Butcher, should immediately have set up for a Priest, and fell a trying his skill at the Altar! But if he had, if the Earth had not swallow'd him up, or Fire from Heaven consum'd him, he would have been ston'd to Death by the Congregation!

But leaving the wild Enthusiasts with our hearty Prayers that God would send a better Mind and a right Understanding among them, Let us see what the Sober, the Rational *Socinian* says to this matter; and if we look into the *Racovian* Catechism, we may presently find both what they think, and how they argue. The Question there being put, *Whether They who Teach in the Church have any need of being Sent by Others?*

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The Catechumen positively and shortly answers, *Non habent*, and has these wise Reasons put in his Mouth for it : *Because they Preach no New or Unheard of Doctrine, and because the Apostle, describing every thing that is Necessary to this Office, makes no mention of such a Mission.* Where first we may take Notice, that the whole Business and Duty of a Minister of *Christ* (as was before hinted) is by them dwindled into Preaching, and then if he has no News to bring, he need have no new Commission to tell over an old Story ! Is not this a Glorious Character both of a Minister, and of the Gospel itself ? But have *They* then, that bring a New and Unheard of Doctrine, need of being Sent ? Yes, This they allow, Nay, This, as in the Case of the Apostles, they tell us is necessary. If so, if a New and Unheard of Doctrine requires of Necessity, that they that publish it should have a Mission, then of all that ever have Preach'd since the beginning of Christianity, the *Socinians* need One most ; But whence should they have it ? from the Holy Spirit they cannot, for they deny any such Person : They must then be sent by some other Spirit, whom yet tho' they Obey, they are as Loath to Own, as him they resist. But the Apostle, it seems, *in describing every thing that is necessary to his Office makes no mention of such a Mission.* That

is,

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is, when *St. Paul* purposely writes about this very Business to *Timothy*, to caution him whom to send, that he *might lay hands suddenly on no Man*, and to instruct him fully and particularly how They were to be qualify'd that were to be Sent, To be Sent is not reckon'd up among any of those Qualifications. Is not this now reasoning closely? are not these *Socinians* notable arguers? are not the subtlest of the *Jesuits*, in comparison of them, Scolds and Bunglers? Yet, methinks, it makes somewhat for the Orders of the Church which we contend for, that Men so famous for Acuteness of Wit, and Strength of Reason, can find no better Arguments against them. But it is no wonder that these Men should oppose a Ministry; For he that receiveth you, says our Saviour, *receiveth me*; and since they are resolv'd to deny him that sends, how should they admit those that are sent? In the meanwhile we must not repine to meet with the same Usage as our great Master, *for the Servant is not above his Lord*! We must rather count it as an Honour to our Function, that they who would spoil us of our Orders, are the same, who would rob *Christ* of his Divinity.

And thus having endeavour'd to shew the Necessity from Scripture, and the Expediency from Reason, of a Divine Mission
in

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in general, I proceed to do right to that Sacred Mission in particular, by which we ourselves have receiv'd Authority to feed the Flock of *Christ*: Where I shall not presume so much upon your Patience, as to detain you in confuting the little Objections and Cavils of the *Romanists* against our regular Succession, much less in detecting their impudent Lies or Forgeries, or the senseless Tale of a Nags-head Consecration, which they themselves, Men not of the tenderest Foreheads, begin to be asham'd of; but taking that for granted which has been abundantly prov'd, and which cannot with any shew of Reason be deny'd, that That Consecration which they so much malign, was Good, and even *according* to their own Principles, if not Canonically, yet Essentially valid, and so no breach made in the lineal Succession: I shall only speak somewhat briefly of the Necessity of Episcopal Ordination, such as Our Church, most agreeably to the Word of God and the purest Antiquity, useth. And here Two things are to be prov'd,

Namely, That there ever has been in the Church of *Christ* such an Order as that of Bishops, distinct from the Presbyters, endu'd with a Superiority of Jurisdiction, and larger Extent of Power.

2dly,

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2^{dly}, That this particular Power of Ordination has always been an incommunicable Right of that Order.

And 1st, The Government, which in the Language of the Earliest Antiquity we call Episcopal, and which we now see exercis'd in our own Church, as it appears by a multitude of Places in Scripture to have been practis'd by the Apostles themselves; so also, that it was, by Imposition of Hands, deriv'd and committed by them to other particular single Persons, as namely to *Timothy* and *Titus*, is as plain: If Ordaining Presbyters and Deacons, if giving Orders to the Churches, if establishing Rules for Christian Discipline, if receiving and hearing Accusations against Presbyters and others, if exercising Ecclesiastical Censures, if giving *Offenders over to Satan*, and *restoring* the Penitent, may be allow'd to be sufficient Instances of such a Power; as sure they must be, since Bishops, as such, claim no more. That the Apostles exercis'd this Power is on all hands own'd, and the charge to *Titus* and *Timothy* is too plain to be deny'd. To evade this therefore, we are told, that they were Extraordinarily Call'd, and were but Temporary Officers, which, as it is said precariously and without any manner of proof, so it overthrows all the other Church Powers, which these Objectors allow and hold perpetual.

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Besides

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Besides which, it is manifestly false in matters of Fact: for, it both appears in *History*, that each of these had a Successor endu'd with the same Episcopal Power, and in these *Epistles* also, that *St. Paul* design'd such a Succession: For, *1 Tim. 6. 14.* Where he charges him to *keep this commandment without Spot, Unrebukenable, untill the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*, which was impossible to be done without a continu'd line of Succession, he must be presum'd to have intended, that he should have such Successors, and in order to it, to have given him power to Ordain them. We may add to this the Testimony of the Holy Ghost; owning afterwards, and approving this in the Angels of the Seven Churches of *Asia*; who, by the Unanimous consent of the Fathers, were the Bishops of those Churches, as may plainly be gather'd from the Text itself. One of these we find the Spirit commending, for not bearing with those that were Evil; and for purging his Church of Hereticks and false Teachers that come without being Sent: *Thou hast try'd them which say they are Apostles and are not, and hast found them Liars. Thou hatest the Deeds of the Nicolaitans, whom I also hate.* Of others the Spirit complains, that they suffer'd the Doctrine of the same *Nicolaitans*, and the Doctrine of *Balaam* and *Jezebel*, Prophesying and Seducing in their Churches; and

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and lays to their Charge the faults of the Clergy as well as the People; which had been an ungrounded and an unjust Reprehension, if Authority had not been in them over both the Rod of Ecclesiastical Discipline, and the Power of casting Seducers out of the Church. *He, then, that hath an Ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the Angels of the Churches, and learn to revere that Authority which the Son of God by his Testimonial Letters, and which the Holy Ghost salutes with this Title of Honour, saying to St. John his Secretary, To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, To the Angel of the Church of Smyrna, To the Angel of the Church of Pergamos, &c.*

The Places in Scripture that prove this Power are so pregnant, that all that can be urg'd against the being of such an Office as that of Bishop, distinct from a Presbyter in the New Testament, is, that those two Names are there often promiscuously us'd; which if it were granted, (for the late Learned Bishop of Chester, will by no means yield that it has been prov'd) yet from Community of Names to argue Identity of Office, is a very weak and fallacious way of Arguing; and which, if admitted, would prove as well, that the Offices of a Presbyter and a Deacon and an Apostle were all One; for the Apostles themselves in their own

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Writings are often styl'd * Presbyters and Deacons. Since we are sure we find such a distinct Power as we contend for, expressly describ'd, we stand not so much upon the Name; when we are secure of the thing, it is but trifling to cavil about Words. Tho', what is more usual? what more commonly known? than that the same Words may, in their first and general signification, take in several very different things, till they are, by a peculiar Appropriation, restrain'd to somewhat special in the Kind, and Then they become in a manner New Words; and Things being always before Words, the Thing, which the restrain'd use of the Word signifies, must have been before That Word was restrain'd to such a signification. The Office therefore of that Chief Ecclesiastical Overseer, which the word Bishop does import, *was of Necessity Sometime, and might have been a long time in Being*, before that general Word was limited to signify so particularly: Which is a sufficient Answer to the less distinct undetermin'd Use of this Name in Scripture, tho' we find it immediately after, by Ecclesiastical usage, Universally appropriated to the signification it now bears, as by the most early Writers of the Church, St. Clement, St. Ignatius, and the Apostolical Canons plainly appears. Whatever Name therefore the Apostles call'd it by, we are

* Πρεσβύτεροι, Διακονοι,

sure

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sure they exercis'd *This* Authority; and finding so soon after them, nay in the life time of some of them, both the Name and Thing in Every One of the Churches which they founded, we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that it was by Their Institution. Which whosoever shall go about to contradict, let them give any tolerable Account, how Episcopal Government should so speedily and so universally spread itself over the whole Christian World, as it is most notorious that it did, that it was not accounted a Church that was not Subject to a Bishop. How is it possible to conceive, that all the several Churches, dispers'd far and wide, and distant from each Other, should have conspir'd so unanimously, and consented in One and the same form' of Government, unless they deriv'd it from the same Original, and receiv'd it at first together with the Faith itself from the Apostles? St. *Austin* tells us, There are but two ways possible of accounting for so general a Consent as this, in any matter that is not plainly commanded in Scripture, Namely, That they must have been either deriv'd from Apostolical Authority, or been Decreed by some General Council. But now, as the learned Editor of the *Synodicon* observes, there is not one Law, not one Canon, not the least Footstep of one

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Decree of any Council extant, or hinted at by any Father or ancient Ecclesiastical Writer, by which this Government is either Instituted or Confirm'd. It remains therefore, according to that known general Rule of the same Father, Whatsoever the Universal Church holds, and has always held, if not Ordain'd by any Council, must be concluded to have been receiv'd from the Authority of the Apostles; that of the Government of the Church by Bishops, the least that can be said is, that it is of Apostolical Institution.

And this very same Argument will as strongly prove the Second Thing we laid down, which is, that The Power of Ordination has ever been in their Hands.

For, that this Power of Ordaining did ever belong by peculiar Right to the Bishop, is (no less than Episcopacy itself) constantly presuppos'd in the most Ancient Canons of the Church, as much Elder than They.

There is not one Canon to be found, which *Confers* that Power on Bishops, but many that prescribe Rules and Measures to the Exercise of it. Thus, the Apostolical Canons, as they are call'd, determine what Numbers of Bishops shall be requir'd to the conferring of each different Order, as Three to the Consecration of a Bishop, and One only to the Ordination of a Priest or a Deacon;

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Deacon; and divers Other Canons afterwards there are, which restrain Episcopal Ordinations to stricter Rules, all which confirm their Original Authority, and prove that they exercis'd that Power before, without those Restrictions; And, that all other pretended Ordinations beside were void and null, several Decrees of Councils afterwards abundantly prove. Thus the second Oecumenical Council, That of *Constantinople*, after it had declar'd *Maximus* to have been no Bishop, immediately adds, *and all That by Him have been ordain'd into what Degree soever, are [ἀνόμοι] in the same condition as if they never had been Consecrated*; and there is a famous and known Instance, which *St. Athanasius* gives us in his second Apology, of a Council at *Alexandria*, that decreed *Ischyas* a meer Laick, because he was Ordain'd by *Colluthus* a meer Presbyter. And *Socrates* in his History says, that what *Ischyas* did afterwards, **deserv'd to be punish'd with many Deaths*. But how does he set forth his Crime? not that he contemn'd and violated the Decree of the Sacred Council; but that never having been initiated into Holy Orders, he took upon him the name of a Presbyter, and exercis'd the Office of a Priest, as his words are, and yet he that Ordain'd him, *Colluthus*, was a True and Canonical Presbyter. It were endless

* Περὶ τῆς πολλῶν θανάτων αἰτίας.

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to reckon up all the Testimonies of Antiquity in this so clear a Point ; the whole Stream of Church Writing and Church Practice is for us , and agree with that of *Epi-phanius* , That *Presbyters indeed have Power by Baptism to beget Children, but Bishops only by Ordination to beget Fathers to the Church*. So much even *St. Jerom* himself, who of all the Fathers is the least favourable to the Order of Bishops , and the stiffest Asserter of the Rights of Presbytery , is forc'd to confess, *What is there says he, that a Bishop does, except only Ordination ; which a Presbyter may not do ?* But in abatement of the absolute Necessity of such an Ordination , we are often urg'd with this captious and invidious Question ; What, will ye deny that there is any Lawful Ministry in all the Reform'd Churches abroad, who have none but Presbyterian Ordination ? To which we may return , that their Case, and that of our Wilful Dissenters at home , is quite different: For most of those abroad in the beginning of the Reformation have frequently own'd, that it was absolute Necessity that forc'd them at first very unwillingly to alter the Ecclesiastical Government, and many of 'em have since express'd an earnest desire of such a one as we enjoy. But how great their Necessities are, and how far Necessity may go towards making that Lawful, which otherwise

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otherwise could not be so, is not our business to determine: Much less are we willing to dispute the Possibility of Salvation out of a Church, that has not such a Succession of Pastors by Episcopal Ordination as we most justly plead for. We know that neither God's Arm is shorten'd, nor his Bowels shut up, that neither his Power, nor his Goodness can be confin'd. We know, that his Mercy and Grace can supply all Canonical defects, wherever there is true Faith and good Works: Just as we Piously Hope and Warrantably Teach, that he confers the Benefits of Sacraments, where they are not possible to be had, to the hearty desirers of Them. But this still, I think, we may safely pronounce, that whatever Possibility there may elsewhere be, the Certainty which depends upon God's Promises, and the Efficacy of *Ordinary* Grace is chiefly, if not solely to be had there, where this Order is retain'd. Because we there, and there only, are sure that the Sacraments are administer'd by those, who have receiv'd Authority from the Holy Ghost to make them effectual. Let then our Charity be as large as is possible to our Brethren of the Reform'd Churches abroad, but let it not make us unjust to the most sound part of the whole Reformation at home. Let us not go about to defend Domestick Schism
by

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by Foreign Necessity; Nor, with the *Israelites*, slight or reject this Divine Government, that we *may be like to the Nations round about us.*

To conclude, if these things be True, if the Grace that is come by *Jesus Christ* is not dispens'd but by his Church, if there is no Entrance *into* this Church, nor in it any Forgiveness of Sins, or Means of Sanctifying Grace, but what is convey'd by their Office, to whom by the Holy Spirit is given the Ministry of Reconciliation, if this Ministry none can have but those only that are lawfully Sent; and if none have Power to send but those that have receiv'd it in an uninterrupted Succession, from those that had it from *Christ* himself; and lastly, if none can justly lay claim to such a Succession but Bishops duly Consecrated, if all these things are True, as I see not how any one of them can be disprov'd, Then surely we have great Reason, as many as are of this Communion, to Bless Almighty God for the Assurance we have that we are in the Covenant of the Gospel, which certainly none but those who are within the Pale of the Church can have. As for those who neither have, nor pretend to such a Succession from the Apostles, whether they are within the Church or without, we judge not, (tho' indeed the
Ancient

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Ancient Fathers do, and that on the condemning side) neither presume we to set limits to the Extraordinary Uncovenanted Mercies of God; what They are or how far They may Extend, we know not: But This we are sure of, that the Privileges of being within *Christ's* Holy Catholick Church, which only has a Right and Claim to the Promises, are Inestimable, or else they had not been purchas'd for us at so Dear a rate as the most *precious Blood of the Eternal Son*, and made good and convey'd to us by the *Holy Spirit of God*.

To whom therefore, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascrib'd all Glory and Praise, all Might, Majesty and Dominion both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

SERMON XIII.

PROV. X. 9.

He that walketh Uprightly, walketh Surely.

TH E R E is not a more Universal, nor indeed a more Just Complaint in the World, than of the Uncertainty of all things in it. No Man can rationally account himself secure of keeping any Good he enjoys, or obtaining any he pursues, unless he could command all the Chances in the World. But how can he command them, when he cannot so much as number them? Possibilities are as Infinite as God's Power; and whatsoever may come to pass, no Man can certainly conclude shall not. And there is no Good thing which a Man pleases himself in Possessing,
or

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or thinks himself in the fairest way of acquiring, but is liable to be lost by Ten Thousand accidents, wholly out of all Mortal Power either to foresee or prevent. And yet the Uncertainty of this World is not more notorious than (without the Light of Religion) is the Uncertainty of what shall be hereafter. And therefore what a confus'd and wretched State must that Life needs be, which at present hangs every minute in doubt and uncertainty of every good thing it either wishes or enjoys; & which must shortly terminate, as an Atheistical Philosopher express'd at his Death, in *a great Leap into the Dark*? Now this being allow'd, as it cannot be deny'd, to be the present Condition of the World, should we not esteem it a mighty advantage to be exempted from the common lot, and to find some sure footing, some certainty in this unsecure and slippery Pilgrimage upon Earth? and at the same time to be deliver'd from the Darkness and Perplexities of a Future State? In all the difficulties that attend Human Life, in all the changes and chances of this Frail, Unstable and Perillous Condition of Mortality, to have One plain Guide to direct us, One strait Path, that if we resolutely stick to it and are entirely purpos'd, neither for Hopes nor Fears, Danger nor Interest, ever to swerve from it, will infallibly lead us to
 Safety

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Safety and Security, how unvaluable a Blessing must this needs be? How would it put us out of the reach of those Evils, to which Man is born as *Naturally as the Sparks fly Upward*? How safe and fearless would it make Prosperity? How easy, nay how comfortable, nay how advantageous, nay how glorious would it render Adversity? In every state of Life, in every alteration of Circumstances and Outward Accidents, how steady, how unconcern'd, how constant to ourselves, (which is the chief Glory of a great Mind,) would it make and preserve us! But above all, what unspeakable Consolation would it afford to have a blessed Assurance of Future Glory, to have our Minds establish'd with Confidence towards God, and *Hopes full of Immortality*? Now this short, but very comprehensive Saying of the wisest of Men, this plain but useful Observation in my Text, will serve, if well consider'd and duly practis'd, to all those great Purposes I have mention'd. Religion Only can restore us to that State of security which was at first forfeited by Sin. Righteousness and Integrity, the governing all our Actions by the fixt and unalterable Principles of Conscience and Honesty, and ever adhering stedfastly to our Plain Duty, whatever temptations there may be to draw us from it, is the Only wise, the Only safe Course that will

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will never fail to bring us to the Journey's end that we contend for, Happiness; that will make our Way, (be it never so beset with Hardships) passable to us; and when our Travel is over, most certainly bring us Peace at the last. And that Man can never be truly miserable, can never but be full of Security and Comfort, tho' all the Calamities and Disgraces and Poverty and Pain that the Devil was suffer'd to inflict upon Holy Job, should by permission of the same Providence be his Lot, who can truly say with that same Holy Man (*Job 27. 5, 6.*) *Till I dye I will not remove my Integrity from me; My Righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go, My Heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* David assures us *He that does these things shall never Fall*; for, as his Son speaks in my Text, *Walking Uprightly he walketh Surely.*

The Phrase which the Wise Man here makes use of, *Walking Uprightly*, may be taken either in a more wide and general, or else in a more restrain'd and particular Sense.

If we take it in the first Sense, as Uprightness and Righteousness signify usually in Scripture all manner of Holiness and Virtue, (*ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη συνίσταται ἐκ πάντων ἀρετῶν*) by *Walking Uprightly* will be meant at large the guiding all ones Actions by the Rules of Religion, an Uniform and Exact Obedience to all the Laws of God.

If

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If we take it in the second more restrain'd and proper signification, as Uprightness signifies Justice, Integrity and Sincerity; by *Walking Uprightly* will be meant more particularly a constant use of Honesty, Plainness and Simplicity in all our Dealings, in Opposition to Guile and Hypocrisy, Craft and Worldly Wisdom.

And in both these Senses it will be easy to shew that *Walking Uprightly is walking Surely*. I begin with the First.

Now he may justly and properly be said to walk Surely, who can secure a happy Event to his Actions against all Contingencies or Chances whatever. And that the Man who acts constantly according to the dictates of Religion and Virtue can do so, will be Evident from the Principles upon which all his Actions are grounded; which are These, That there is an Almighty and Allwise Being that overlooks and takes account of all that is done upon Earth; A God who, tho' his *Throne is in Heaven*, yet *his Eyes behold, his Eyelids try the Children of Men*. And that this God has appointed a Day of Recompence and a Future state either of Happiness or Misery, each Eternal, to be the Portion of every Man according to the Quality of the Works that he does here in the Flesh. From which Principles he naturally gathers, that it is his chiefest Interest,

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his only Concern, so to act in this World, as to obtain the endless Happiness, and escape the Everlasting Misery of the other. And can there be a more Infalible and Sure Conclusion than this? When a Man is perswaded that he Acts always in the sight of his Judge, from whom he expects a certain Retribution of Bliss, or Woe to all Eternity; is there any thing in the World can give him any Security or ground of Confidence, but the performing the Duties to which Glory and Immortality are annex'd, and eschewing the Evils to which Shame and Destruction and Eternal Death are as inseparably link'd? No certainly. When he is once convinc'd of the Truth of these Principles, there is no other way but this of promising to himself any manner of safety as to his Everlasting State; and as to whatever may be had on *This* side of That State, *What will it profit him to gain the whole World, and to lose his own Soul?* To act so contrary to a Man's own Eternal Interest, is to act against Natural Reason, as well as Reveal'd Religion; and to contradict Nature, as well as to defy Grace. This is so plain, that it need not, one would think, be insisted upon, that granting the first Principles of the Upright Man to be True, namely, that there is an Allseeing God, who will certainly bring all Mankind to Judgment, that then He who
has

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has Walked so as to be able to appear at that great Day with Confidence, and lift up his Head with Joy before that dreadful Tribunal, *has walked most Surely.*

But some may say, it may admit of some doubt whether these Principles are True or no. And indeed if we were to judge of the Opinions of Men by their Lives, we should be apt to conclude that very few are enough perswaded of them, If the general Corruption of Manners, every where too visible, proceed not, rather from a willful neglect of regarding and duly considering these important Truths, than from any Diffidence of them upon due Examination. But however let us grant this, that They are *Doubtful*, which is a very large Concession and more than Reason will compel us, nay allow us, but for Arguments sake, to grant. Let us yield that the first Inbred Notions of our Minds concerning the Reasonableness and Congruity of these things, the Voice of our own Consciences, the Universal consent of the best and wisest, the simplest and meanest of all Countries, of all Ages, of all Professions, the daily Dispensations of Providence, the constant Works of Nature, and the frequent Works against Nature, in fine, all that Light which was enough in *St. Paul's* Judgment to leave the Heathen World without Excuse; let us, I say, allow

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that all these together, which is very hard to conceive, have yet left doubtful the being of a Just God, who shall judge the World. Let this greatest and most weighty Truth, which the meer Natural Man may be strongly convinc'd of by Reason, but which the Christian is most entirely and fully assur'd of by Faith, be suppos'd only Probable, or if the Infidel pleases barely Possible, yet even upon this Supposition it will evidently appear, that the Upright Walker, the constant Practicer of Virtue and Piety, has taken by much the surer Path than the Wicked. *Nay farther, let us suppose all that the most Atheistical Person can desire, even that which his Predecessors of old in the second Chap. of *Wisdom* laid down for their Principle, *That we are born at all adventures, and that we shall be hereafter as tho' we had never been*: Yet even this suppos'd, I can't see, but the Righteous Man, if all things be truly weigh'd, in the common and usual Course of things, has much the better of the Wicked and prophane Liver.

I might instance in most of the Temporal Blessings and Concerns of Human Life; such as Ease, Health, Reputation, and the like; and shew from every one of 'em, the Truth of the Apostle's Assertion, that *Godliness has the Promise*, and I may also add the Enjoy-

* Vide Serm. IV.

ment,

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ment, of the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come.

* But these things having been at large insisted on, in some of the former Discourses, I shall proceed to consider the words of the Text, taken in their more strict and particular signification, as by Uprightness is meant, *Justice, Integrity, Plainness, and Sincerity, in Opposition to Guile and Hypocrisy, Craft and Worldly Wisdom.* And here I shall endeavour to shew,

1st, That Walking Uprightly is the most Easy and Plain Path we can take.

2^{dly}, That 'tis the most Honourable.

3^{dly}, That it is the most Secure way that we can Walk.

1st, Walking Conscientiously and Honestly is the most Easy and Plain Path we can take.

The Way of Truth and Righteousness is but One, but those of Falsehood and Wickedness are Infinite; there is no end of wandering, when we once get into the Mazes and Intricacies of Indirect Dealing. In false Living, as well as in false Reasoning; One Absurdity never goes single, but is to be supported and kept up with another; there is † an Original Lye runs quite thro'

* Vide Serm. VI, and VIII. † πρῶτον ψεύδος.

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the whole course of such a Life, which must be maintain'd and cover'd with a long train of more. The Man of Integrity and a single Heart has but One part to play, but One look to put on, and that his own, whilst the Cunning designer, the Man that is to bring his Business about by Politick fetches, Crafty collusions, and all the Acts of Dissimulation, must be allways shifting his Countenance, and changing his Vizard, and in perpetual fear lest it should fall off; for if it does, he must expect to be his'd off the Stage, and be quite spoil'd for a Politician. And let any Man judge whether this be not a most toilsome and difficult, as well as a mean and dishonourable part.

The Man that has once forfeited his Integrity, has in a manner forfeited his Liberty too. For in unjust and wicked things, the more a Man yields and complies, the more he needs to do so. New steps and transgressions bring with them New necessities, and One ill Act is a snare and argument to another. When once they have begun, and are got in, they dare not look back, they are apt to think they must go on and do any thing further, that comes under the notion and appearance of being Necessary; sometimes to hide, as was *David's* case, sometimes to indemnify, or perhaps to maintain and justify what has been once ill done.

Having

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Having lost the true Ballast of Integrity and Innocence, they float now at random, as the Gale of outward Necessity and Convenience drives.

The Man of Integrity is never enslav'd by this Bondage, or entangled in these Difficulties; neither is He that proposes one steady direct course of Honesty troubled or concern'd to observe every turn and motion of other Men, to be ever jealous and suspicious, that there is somewhat more than Ordinary on foot, some deep design or other contriving against him, which is the constant plague of Men who are ever designing and contriving themselves. How smoothly might They carry on their Plots, how secure might They be of their Own Contrivances; could they be but once assur'd that no Body Contriv'd or Plotted but Themselves? But 'tis this perpetually startles and alarms them, that they have a shrewd suspicion that Others are at work too as well as themselves, and those such as are every way their Equals in Conduct and Cunning.

But there is another Advantage of Sincerity too, that it is not only the most Easy way to *walk* in, but the most plain to *find out*.

It is impossible, in the Corruption that has spread itself over the whole World, but Offences must come, and that the unexpected Changes and wonderful Alterations

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of Worldly Affairs must often raise such difficulties as will puzzle the most observing and the most wise, (wise only in the World's Wisdom I mean) how to steer aright, which way to direct his Course. But at the same time, which is the wonderous great comfort of the truly Consciencious Man, it is almost impossible that he should ever be at a loss which way to take. *The Highway of the Upright is to depart from Evil*, says Solomon, and for our direction it bids us only look out and find it. *Let thine Eyes look right on, and let thy Eyelids look straight before thee* (Prov. 4. 25.) *Turn not to the Right Hand nor the Left, remove thy foot from Evil*, v. 27. When the Way lyes so straight, and he is so sure it is the true One, whatever difficulties he may encounter in it, yet he will not venture being lost by seeking By-Roads and making to himself indiret Paths to avoid them. He thinks it, as it really is, the mark of a weak Judgment to trust to his own devices rather than the straight line that is chalk'd out for his direction, and that it is the only true Wisdom and Safety to keep in God's way, and neither despise the beaten way for its plainness, nor shun the rugged and difficult one for its danger.

It is not so very hard, as is often pretended, to understand our Duty; Men may, with much more ease than they will allways
own,

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own, know which is the true Way, if they suffer'd not their Lusts or Affections, or Interest to seduce and lead them astray. But if there should ever happen any real difficulty or doubt concerning the Path a Man ought to take, I am confident a good Conscience, a well meaning and sincere Heart, is the best Casuist in the World; an honest Mind will sooner Resolve this Scruple than the most expert and best studied Divine. God will not suffer true and earnest endeavours after necessary Truth, join'd with hearty Resolution to embrace and obey it when found, to be long without finding it. By his Blessing, all the mists and clouds of Doubting are soon dispell'd from a truly Upright Heart; *Unto the Upright there arises Light in Darknes*, says the Psalmist, and most true is that of the Wise Man, *The Righteousness of the Perfect shall direct his Way*. Prov. 11. 3. 5.

But 2dly, this Upright Walking is not only the easiest and plainest, but the most becoming a great Mind, and a Man that has any Value for his Reputation or Honour. As much despis'd as generally it is, yet in itself it is highly Honourable. And there cannot be a greater sign of the degeneracy of a Nation, nor a worse presage of what it is further running into, than to find That Honesty, Plainness and Simplicity, in which
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we can only say, we have heard our Nation once excell'd, and our Ancestors were so distinguish'd by and so renown'd for, grown so worn out and Old fashion'd Qualities, as to be ridicul'd and laugh'd out of the World; and in their room a sort of mean, trifling, shuffling Sophistical Policies taken up, which no Man of true Honour or sound Judgment would stoop to meddle with. If there were any spark of Virtue, of Magnanimity or true Sense left among us, we should have other notions of things; Upright dealing and Truth, for all its Plainness and Simplicity, would not appear so mean or contemptible a thing. Plainness itself, let not our fine Gentlemen too much mistake themselves, is far from being so. On the contrary, the best Judges have ever heretofore accounted, in all the Works of Art or the Products of Wit, the Compositions of the Hand or of the Head, whatever is most Simple and most Plain, (if it have withal Solidity, Justice and Proportion) most Durable; most Beautiful, most Magnificent. And why should not the same hold good in the Moral, as well as the Artificial or Intellectual Works of Men? Certainly it does, and a Life led in an Equal and Constant Tenor of Exactness and Justice, can't choose, how Plain soever it be, nay for being so, but be Lovely, Honourable, Venerable.

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perable. I am sure St. Paul highly values himself upon such a Conversation, 2Cor. 1. 12. *Our Rejoicing* (as the English Translation renders it) but rather as the Original *καυχόμενοι* imports, *Our boasting, our glorying is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with Fleeshly Wisdom, we have had our Conversation in the World.*

And how grateful such a Character was to our Blessed Saviour himself, we have One remarkable Instance in that kind Welcome he gave to *Nathanael* on account of it; when being presented to him he cry'd out with Admiration and Delight, *Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.* However therefore some People may value themselves upon their Craftiness, it is certainly no great commendation to this Quality, that our Saviour in another place calls *Herod* Fox, as one of the Highest Marks of his Derestation and Contempt of Him. For Certainly nothing makes any Man, especially a Great Man, more Despicable and Mean, than Cunning: All Disguises being below the Great, as arguing either want of Wisdom or Power.

It is a very true Maxim of *Tully's*, that "That Ever becomes every Man best, that is most his Own:" and if we reflect on the most Politick Customs and Manners of Human

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man Life, nothing we shall find is truly graceful that is over mix'd or unnaturally forc'd; No word we speak, no phrase we use, no gesture, no tone of voice that is over artificial, but it presently offends; nothing in Beauty, in Habit, in Action, in Motion can please, that is affectedly labour'd and over adorn'd. Nothing has so much Reverence in Human Conversation, as true Ingenuity, manly Plainness, gentle Easiness, undissembled Sincerity. Nothing sooner, or more, or longer, affects Men with delight, and love and admiration: nothing is more honourable, nothing more Amiable, nothing indeed more Easie and Safe. It is very probable, that more of the deep, dark, reserv'd, crafty Men have at last sail'd of their Designs, than of the plain, upright, honest Men.

Which is the Third, and last thing I shall undertake to make good, namely, that Walking uprightly is not only the most easy and plain, the most becoming and honourable, but the prudentest and surest way too. That is, downright Honesty, how mean an Opinion soever some Men may have of it, in comparison of their Own Craft and Cunning, is the best Policy at last.

For First, an experimented Integrity and open Frankness in dealing Naturally begets such a Confidence and Trust among Men, as highly promotes the Success of a known
Honest

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Honest Man's Undertakings. But Craft and Cunning have the quite Contrary Effects, and as naturally give the alarm to all about, to stand upon their guard and be as shy, jealous and suspicious as they can. And as for Diffimulation, it is certain that can be of no use further than it is conceal'd; forasmuch as none will trust a known Cheat. Now as some Men use Diffimulation for their Interest, Others have an Interest as strongly engaging them to use all their Art and Industry to find it out; which makes it infinitely hard, if not morally impossible, for a Man to carry on a long course of Diffimulation, without discovery. This false Cunning will betray it self by a Thousand ways, by too much or too little care to hide it, by being too open or too shy, by a real reservedness, or an affected frankness; but what is a certain and never failing sign of the double dealer, is his Inconstancy to himself, his shifting with the various changes of times, in which he is always a quick Revolver, and as nimble at a Change, as a well manag'd Horse, that in his fullest career can suddainly stop, and turn short in the compass of his own length. There are none of these Men of art but secretly pride themselves, that they see thro' all the designs of those they deal with: and do they think that the World don't see them too thro'

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thro' all their thin disguises? Let them not flatter themselves so vainly. For as *Solomon* tells us in the same Verse with my Text, *He that perverteth his ways shall be known.* Now Dissimulation once discover'd is not only no Help, but the greatest Impediment of Action in the World. For since Men will not Trust any farther than they judge a Person for his Sincerity fit to be trusted; it follows that a known Perverter of his ways can achieve nothing great or considerable: for not being able to gain Men's Trust, he cannot engage their Concurrence, and so is left to Act singly upon his own Bottom; which being all that he can do, must needs be contemptible. While Integrity and Honesty having irresistible Charms, that draw all Men to Esteem and Reverence and confide in a Man, do consequently contribute to the promoting of all his Righteous designs and endeavours.

But further, how often does the Crafty Politician over-reach himself? how often, thinking others Act with as much Cunning and as little Truth as himself, does he take true Honesty and upright Dealing, when he meets it, for a feint only, and a Copy of the Countenance? and suspecting ever somewhat deeper intended than what appears, believes wrong, and consequently acts wrong, and succeeds accordingly.

Again,

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Again, when this sort of Men meet with plain Dealers, and know 'em to be so, They are as much put out of their Play, as a skilful Fencer is, when he lights on a sturdy Fellow that has no Skill at all; he had better engag'd with a Master like himself; For true Honesty, is a solid, unmoveable Quality, that will not let a Man give ground; but on the contrary presses still forward, and by that Means baffles your Man of Art, and often puts your fine Contriver as hard to it, as the determin'd Courage of a truly Gallant Man does him, that has no foundation of real inborn Bravery, but relies only upon the Skill of his Weapon, and the use of a Trick he has been taught.

This Integrity also, which is another Instance of the Trust that we ought to repose in it, is a sure Comfort, when after all the most just and prudent Methods us'd, Disappointments happen. The Conscience of having propos'd to himself none but honest ends, and of having us'd none but just means, will be an Ease and Satisfaction, whatsoever Success befalls. He, according to *David's* excellent advice, *Rests in the Lord and waits patiently for him, frets not himself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the Man that bringeth wicked devices to pass. He trusts that at last God will make his Righteousness as clear as the Light, and his just dealing*

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as the Noon Day. Psal. 37. He trusts that Truth must at last prevail: Truth, that was prov'd in the Presence, and allow'd by the Judgment even of *Darius* himself, to be the strongest of all things; stronger than either *Wine or Women or the King.* 1 Esdr. 4. *As for Truth it endureth and is always strong, it liveth and conquereth for evermore: v. 38. She is the Strength, Kingdom, Power and Majesty of all Ages.*

'Tis this Integrity that, in difficultest Times and the greatest Streights, gives a Man constant Consolation and Support; nay more than that, not only supports Men under Hardships, but often preserves Men from 'em. For it inspires Courage and Resolution, *The Righteous is bold as a Lion:* and a well settled Resolution to do ones Duty, whatever ensues upon it, has often sav'd Men from being forc'd to the contrary, and often, as *Solomon* tells us, when a *Man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his Enemies to be at Peace with him.* But Tricks and Shifts and prevaricating with Conscience, make Men only the more contemptible to their Oppressors, who can then insult over their Virtues and Minds, as well as their Bodies and Estates.

But Lastly, the Upright Walker does not only engage all Good and Wise Men, but the God of all Goodness and Wisdom himself

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himself to be on his side : and how can he miscarry, who has him to his Friend, upon whose sole Will all Events of the Wisest Counsels and Deliberations do depend? We see with what Artifice and Compliance Men will insinuate themselves into the Affections of those, who according to several Révolutions are advanc'd into the Places of Power ; of how much greater Advantage is it to get an Interest in his Favour, who does and shall always Rule over the Sons of Men ? having all Times at his disposal, out of whose Hands no Strength or Policy shall be ever able to wrest the Sway and Dominion of things. For whatever the Wise Men of this World think, Let Men plot as deeply and as finely as they can, yet all the Success of the most advis'd Counsels, put in Practice by the most industrious Diligence and Application, depends still on the favour of an Over-ruling Hand. And this is the true Reason of what seems so strange, tho' it has happen'd in all Ages that have past, and is likely to do so in all that shall come, that the most hopeful Projects, tho' never so finely contriv'd or warily laid, with all the Advantages of Secrecy and Combination of Parties ; yet by some perry Instrument, that perhaps if the Projectors had foreseen they would have despis'd, have been unaccountably baffled, and in the very Minute

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nute that they were thought ripe and ready to break forth into Action, have been blasted by some invisible Power, by some secret Stroke on a suddain dasht to pieces. The whole Elaborate Machine and well laid Contrivance vanishing immediately and disappearing, like the Fabulous enchanted Castles in a Romance. And then the vain Authors of this Politick Fabrick, Disappointed and defeated of their mighty Aims, find out at last that they have not all this while been playing the Knaves only, but, which to them is more mortifying, the Fools too: and confirming that of the Son of Sirach, *The Knowledge of Wickedness is not Wisdom, nor at any time the Counsel of the Wicked Prudence.* Whilst on the other hand, he who always aims at a good End designs nothing but with Sincerity and Righteousness, and prosecutes those Designs by none but just and allowable and Righteous means, has all the reason in the World, even God's own Word, to have Hope and Confidence that Providence will direct, counsel and guide him, and bring a happy Issue to all his just Undertakings. For it is a most undoubted Truth, that the compassing of any Effects depends more upon God and his Providence, than any Human means. The best and likeliest Preparations can never bring them about, when He goes not along with them; and

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and the lowest and most unlikely are sure to do it, when he does. Now the way to have God with us is to Trust in Him, and to Keep his ways.

If we dare rely on Providence and Trust God, he will not fail those *that Trust in him*, but take the tenderest Care of them, and shew himself remarkable in speeding their Matters on. I mean those Matters which, in consistence with the Designs of his Providence, he sees fit should take effect; and no Means or Methods can bring about any things else. As there is no Friend or Deliverer like God, and no Comfort like Hope in Him; So is there no way to make an Interest with him like confiding in, and depending on Him. But to mistrust God is the way to disoblige and lose him, and together with him our own Prosperity and Success too. And there is no greater Instance of Distrusting God, than to aim at compassing any Design by forfeiting Our Integrity, and betaking Ourselves to the use of any Means unallowable by his most Holy Laws. Our Trust in Him therefore must be shew'd by keeping in his Own ways; which when they seem to have the least of visible Probability, have the most of Providence; and so to those that ascribe most to Providence, must needs appear the surest way to Success. *Wait on the Lord and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee*

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to Inherit the Land. Psal. 37. 34. But if, when there is no visible Appearance of Succeeding, or being Safe otherwise, to save ourselves we step out of God's way, and instead of what is lawful, betake ourselves to what seems serviceable and expedient; in leaving the way of Innocence, we are like also to leave the way of Success; and when we desert God, God and Providence will desert us. *Order thy way aright and trust in him,* says the wise Son of Sirach, *but go not aside lest you fall.* Ecclus 2. 6, 7. We shall not only this way be unreliev'd by the Blessing and Assistance, but broken and oppos'd most commonly by the just Judgment of Providence setting itself against us. *For he disappointeth the Deceits of the Crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their Enterprize. He taketh the Wise in their own Craftiness, making their Methods bring about what they study'd to avoid, and the Counsel of the froward is carry'd headlong. They meet with Darknes in the Day time, and grope in the Noon day as in the Night,* as it is elegantly set forth in the 5th Chap. of Job 12, 13, 14. *Commit thy Works unto the Lord,* says Solomon, *and so shall thy Thoughts be establis'd;* and his Father before him, *Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in him, and He shall bring it to pass;* and Eliphaz in Job before 'em both, *If thou return to the Almighty and make thy Prayer to Him,*

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Him, Thou shalt also Decree a thing and it shall be establish'd, and the Light shall shine upon thy ways. Upon which Account also the Satisfaction, that arises to the Honest and Just Dealer upon the good Success of his Undertakings, is infinitely heighten'd and enhanc'd in its Price. For *He* that in the beginning of any Action of Moment has first Commended Himself, and Committed his Works to the Lord, and after used the fairest means to accomplish them, looks upon every Business that prospers in his Hand, not barely as a Human Success, but as a Divine Benediction; receives it not as the Product of his Industry or Wisdom, but as the Return of his Prayers, and the Reward of his Integrity. So that every good thing, *Thus* obtain'd, comes not single; but, besides its own intrinsick Goodness, brings *that* with it, which is infinitely more valuable, an Assurance of the Divine Favour and Love. And 'tis *That* alone that can make the acquisition of any thing, that we most heartily wish or most eagerly pursue, a solid Comfort or real Blessing to us. For the Wicked and Deceitful often may succeed in their crooked and perverse ways; but then, what they think their Happiness, as often proves their Punishment; their very Success is a Curse, and as the Wise Man says, *The Prosperity of Fools shall Destroy them.* For such

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in Solomon's Language are all those that *lean upon their own Understanding, and Trust not their Works unto the Lord.* That which they with so much Artifice and Cunning, so much Pains and Labour, have brought about, is at last no more a True Blessing to them, than it is the True Product, as they vainly flatter themselves, of their own Counsel and Wisdom. Alas! all the *Best and Wisest* Counsels are nothing without God; much less all the Wiles and Contrivances, and the little Tricks and Deceits of the Wicked. What they think, and pride themselves in, as the Sole Authors of, (and therefore are really Guilty of all the Iniquity that they intended) is but under the Order and Disposal of an All-controlling tho' Invisible Providence. *With Him, says Holy Job, is Strength and Wisdom; the Deceiv'd and the Deceiver are his* (Job. 12. 16.) Even when They resist God's Reveal'd Will, they are fullfilling his Secret Will; and when Voluntarily Rebellious to the One, are in spight of themselves Subservient to the Other; and they wickedly execute, what his Wisdom, unknown to them, has justly ordain'd.

Upon a full assurance of this Over-ruling Providential Power, the Righteous Man sets to work: and having taken the Prudentest means that Honesty and Conscience will let him

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him make use of to effect his purpose, yet never relies so much upon them or his Own Wisdom, as not to submit entirely to the Supreme, Sovereign, Commanding Wisdom that disposes all things. And thus wholly putting his Trust in God, and rightly considering that He, who orders the Issues of all Councils and Actions, knows what is best and will bestow it on them that rely on him, and have ever in all their Actions a regard to his Commandments, let the Event be what it will, he is resolv'd to be entirely satisfy'd and content; Thus does he every way walk Surely, and infallibly secure a happy Event to all he undertakes: For he who has resign'd up his own Will to God's, can never be disappointed. By making God's Will his Will, he is sure His Will must be done.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both Now and for Evermore. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

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SERMON XIV.

PROV. X. 24.

*The Fear of the Wicked it shall
come upon him : but the Desire
of the Righteous shall be granted.*

IT is Obvious enough , but not unworthy our Observation, that through this whole Book of *Proverbs*, the Words of the Wisest Man bear some resemblance to the Works of the All-wise God ; For look upon all the Works of the most High, and there are Two and Two, One against Another : Good is set against Evil, and Life against Death ; so is the Godly against the Sinner, and the Sinner against the Godly, *Ecclus 33. 14. 15.* So observe all these Sayings of Solomon, and you shall generally find that in them also, as the same Son of Sirach speaks, *All things are*
Double

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Double One against Another. Eccclus 42. 24. Wisdom and Folly, Virtue and Vice, Hatred and Love, Poverty and Riches, The Lip of Truth and the Lying Tongue, the Diligent and the Sluggard, the Slow to Wrath and the Hasty of Spirit, the Refuser of Instruction and the Hearer of Reproof, with divers others equally opposite; but more comprehensively and most frequently the Wicked and the Righteous, set against and compar'd one with another, make up and adorn this most Admirable and Divine Collection.

And as *St. Austin* elegantly sets forth the Wisdom of the Creator, and the Beauty of the Creation, from the well-order'd Opposition of the Parts of it: So we may say of these Proverbs of *Solomon*, that the continual Antithesis that runs quite through them, gives both Beauty and Force to the Work, and argues the Divine Wisdom of the Writer, For laying thus at once before our Eyes the Natural differences between the Things and Persons that he describes, he makes each one shine out more clearly, by being plac'd by its contrary; as in Painting, Light and Shade are both made more Intense by being plac'd near one another.

And in Moral Discourses, such as this Book consists of, wherein Man's free-will and choice is chiefly exercis'd, this way of collating

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collating and comparing things with their Opposites, is not only, as in all other Institutions, the most Enlightening and Instructive to the Understanding, but the most fair and impartial way of proposing things to our Will and Election; which cannot be so Justly made, as when the two Contraries, out of which we are to choose, are at one view set forth and display'd together. Thus God himself, as the Son of *Sirach* informs us, dealt with Man in the Beginning, when he left him in the Hand of his Own Counsel; *He hath set Fire and Water before thee, stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt.* And thus *Moses* to the *Israelites*, *I call Heaven and Earth to record this Day against you, that I have set before you Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing; therefore choose Life, that thou and thy Seed may Live.* And thus in imitation of God and *Moses*, does *Solomon* in this Book all along set two Contraries together, that we may stretch forth our Hands unto whether we will.

The most frequent Opposition, as I said, and to which most of the rest may be reduc'd, is between Wisdom and Folly, or which is all one in his Language, between Righteousness and Sin in the Abstract, or in the Concrete between the Wicked and Righteous, between their different Thoughts, Counsels, Actions; and consequent to those, the difference of their State and Condition,

as

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as to Happiness or Misery, in this World and that to come. And That in several Instances; particularly in the *Fears* of the One, and the *Desires* of the Other; what *they* are at present, *The Desire of the Righteous is only Good, but the Expectation of the Wicked is Wrath*: Chap. 11. 23. and what shall be their Issue in the words of the Text, *The Fear of the Wicked it shall come upon Him, but the Desire of the Righteous shall be granted.*

From which Words I shall lay down the following Propositions, as Subjects for this present Discourse.

I. That the State of the Wicked is a State of Fear, presuppos'd in the words, *The Fear of the Wicked.*

II. That this is far from a groundless Fear, *It shall come upon Him.*

III. That on the Contrary the State of the Righteous is a State of Desire and Hope.

IV. That this is a Just Desire and well grounded Hope, *It shall be Granted.*

And Lastly, by way of Application, when these two different States have been fairly represented to you, I shall leave it to your own Judgments, which of these two Conditions ye will choose. I begin with the

I. That the State of the Wicked is a State of Fear, and that a Fear

First,

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First, Natural, arising from the first inbred Notions of the Mind, concerning the Essential differences between Good and Evil. For that there is such a Law of Nature, by which things are distinguish'd into Good and Bad, and from which the Actions of Men are properly denominated either Virtuous or Vicious, has not only been the constant agreeing Voice of Mankind, but is so woven into our very Constitution and Frame, that a Man needs but look into himself, and consult the experience of what passes within his own Breast to find, That his Mind has a Rational, as well as his Flesh a Sensible kind of Feeling ; that his Soul is endu'd with as true and distinct a Perception of Moral, as his Body of Physical, Good and Evil ; and that Conscience does as Naturally distinguish between Virtue and Vice, as Sense does between Pleasure and Pain. And by this Light of Reason, this Candle of the Lord set up in the Heart, it is easily discover'd, that as Goodness or Virtue does in the Essence of it imply a present Fitness or Comeliness, and raises an Expectation of Just Praise and Future Reward ; so on the other hand, Vice or Sin carries with it the Idea of Disagreeableness and Turpitude at present, and a strong Apprehension of Blame and Punishment to come. From whence it follows, that from the first Commitment of Sin there results

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results necessarily and unavoidably in the Mind both Shame and Fear: Shame for the Vileness of it, and Fear, for the Vengeance due to it. And the first Vengeance that is executed upon Sin is this very Fear itself of Vengeance. *Prima est hac Ultio*, as even the Heathen Poet witnesses, that the Wicked Wretch receives immediate Condemnation from himself: tho' all the other Courts in the World should absolve him, yet it is not in the Power of a pack'd Jury, or a Corrupted Judge, to set a Man clear with his own Breast, to silence the Evidence he bears about himself, or brow-beat or overrule those thousand Witnesses within. Hence it is, that when a Man has done any Villanous Act, tho' in the highest Place and Power, and so above the Fear of Human Justice; or in the closest Retirement and deepest Secrecy, and so out of the Reach of Human Knowledge or Discovery: yet his Conscience for all that, smites him with Trembling and Horror, and depresses him to a perpetual Trepidation and Poorness of Spirit. And all this, because he has heard a Condemning Sentence from within, which the secret Forebodings of his own Mind tell him will be ratify'd by a sad and certain Execution from above. This is most certainly so; and whatever outward appearances may be, whatever shew of Bravery the most prosperous

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Prosperous Villany may put on, we should be mightily deceiv'd, if we should from thence judge, that a Man, who has a load of any Enormous Guilt upon him, can have any True Peace, or Resolution, or Confidence, or Assurance within. No, neither Walls, nor Barrs, nor Company, nor Watches, nor Guards can keep out Guilty Fears from forcibly intruding in upon him, and making their way to his Heart. But as *Eliphaz* speaking of the Wicked says: *A sound of Fears is ever in his Ears, In Prosperity the Destroyer shall come upon him, He knoweth that the Day of Darknes is ready at his hand, Trouble and Anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him as a King ready to the Battel.* Job 15. 21. 24. Every Great Offence and Presumptuous Crime is a Domestick Fury, that perpetually affrights the Wretch that it possesses, sends faintness into his Heart, so that a shaken Leaf shall chase him, makes him flee when none pursues; makes him like Cain, with the guilt of his Brother's Blood upon him, take Every one he meets for his Executioner, and cry out in the bitterness of his Soul; Behold, it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. This is the terrible Estate of more than ordinary heinous Sinners, and holds in proportion to be true of all others, according to the different degrees of the flagitiousness of their

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their Crimes : Insomuch that there is no Sin so small, but has its Measure and Proportion of Fear attending it. There is always a Fear of Temporal Evils that possesses the Wicked ; whether it is, Left their hidden Villanies should be found out, and so the Sword of secular Justice, which is not born in vain, should overtake them ; Or lest Private Revenge for bold Injuries and Insolent Oppressions, when Publick Revenge sleeps, should Rouse up and consume them ; Or for such Crimes, as Laws take no hold of, as Falsehood, Treachery, Hypocrisy, Ingratitude, and the like, lest the common Hatred, and general Scorn, and just Indignation of Mankind should fall upon 'em ; Or lest for some Sins, such as are Idleness and Prodigality, *Poverty come on 'em as one that travelleth, and their Want like an armed Man* ; Or lest for Others, such as are Lust and Intemperance, Painful and Foul and Odious Diseases, should lay wast their most flourishing Constitutions, and bring Trembling in the Joynts, and Rottenness in the Bones. But besides these Fears of the Evil things of this World, tho' they are sufficiently tormenting and able to imbitter all the sweets of Sin, there is a Fear, as Natural, but much more amazing and confounding ; that there is in reserve beyond these an Unseen and Almighty Vengeance to come, which the sense of

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of his guilt evermore assures him is prepar'd for him, and continually displays before the sight of his affrighted Soul, the horrible Scene of Everlasting Torment in a Future State. This Fear it is, that has ever been felt and own'd and acknowledg'd even among the Heathens themselves, and those that never heard of Divine Revelation. From the Sense of which are all those Accounts they give us of their Infernal Judges, and the Descriptions of the Wracks and the Wheels, the Rowling Stone and the Evergnawing Vulture, and all the several Punishments of the Wicked after Death. All which, tho' for want of clearer Revelation, thus confusedly and darkly set out in Poetical Fictions, according to their Fabulous Theology, sufficiently testify, that there were such general and common Apprehensions naturally implanted in the Minds of Men.

2dly, There is a Fear that pursues the Wicked, more than Natural, grounded upon express Revelation and the sure Word of God, *who will render to every Man according to his Deeds, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that does Evil.* And if, by the meer Light of Reason and Dictates of Conscience, Men could discover so much of the abominable Nature of Sin, as to make 'em by their own Self-condemnation to acknowledge that

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it justly deserv'd ; and consequently to Fear continually that it must undergo due Punishment , either in this World or that to come ; How much more affrighting must these Apprehensions be, when they find 'em all confirm'd by so much clearer Evidence from the Mouth of God himself ? By which all that Natural dread, of which they could give no account how it came to possess their Spirits, is plainly perceiv'd to have been put into their Hearts by the very Maker of them ; and all those first dismal , but uncertain Suspicions, all those tormenting, but dark Guesses , are turn'd into certain Expectations of Indignation and Wrath from Infinite Justice , and Almighty Power to the utmost degree offended and provok'd. How is it possible that any Sinner can think himself one Moment safe or secure, not only from the proper Punishment of his Sins which is Eternal, or even those Temporary ones that are threaten'd by the Laws, either of God or Man ; but even from every one of those thousands of Dangers and Accidents, that each Hour, each Minute, surround him and may bring him to the deepest Misery or final Destruction ; when by the Divine Word he is told , that he is out of the Divine Protection , which only can make a Man dwell in Safety ; when he is conscious to himself, that he has no Right to that Pro-

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Providential Care of God, who *careth for the Righteous, and hideth him under the shadow of his Wings; but sets his Face against the Wicked, and the way of the Ungodly turns upside down?* How can he without Horror reflect upon all the Emphatical Declarations, that God by his Prophets has exprest, of the fierceness of his Anger against Sinners? *Upon the Wicked he shall rain Snares, Fire and Brimstone, Storm and Tempest, this shall be their Portion to drink. Death, Bloodshed, Strife, and the Sword, Calamities, Famine, Tribulation, and the Scurge; these things are Created for the Wicked.* When He is put in mind of all these tremendous Curses of the Law, Denounc'd against the Disobedient, in that remarkable Chapter, the 28th of *Deuteronomy*, can he choose but be amaz'd and confounded, and feel at present that last and concluding Curse of them all verify'd, and even then Executed upon his own guilty Soul, *The Lord shall give thee a trembling Heart, and failing of Eyes, and sorrow of Mind, and thy Life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear Day and Night. In the Morning thou shalt say, would God it were Evening; and at Even thou shalt say, would God it were Morning; for the Fear of thy Heart wherewith thou shalt Fear?* Shall not every Sinner some time or other feel by sad experience, that the very fear of God's Judgments shall be itself one of the severest

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Judgments of God ; who can , and often does, as a present Punishment, as well as a Prefage of future , *deprive* such of *inward Peace*, *fear* 'em with *Dreams* and *terrify* 'em with *Visions*, and make 'em like a troubled Sea, which cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt, *There is no Peace*, saith my God, to the Wicked ? But still these are but the least of those Judgments, that God has in store for Sinners, these are only what the Law threatened, and respect chiefly worldly Plagues and Afflictions: but the Gospel, as it brought *Life*, and *Immortality to Light* to those that imbrace it: so it has in the most clear and plain Terms denounc'd Eternal Death to those that disobey it. For tho' Temporal Evils still pursue the Wicked, and often, when God's wise Providence thinks fit, overtake them here, yet often they do not, and when they do, they are not the proper and adequate Punishments of Sin, nor what is Threatened by the Gospel. No, it is Everlasting Death and the Torments of Hell-fire, that our Saviour denounces to be reserv'd for the final Doom of Impenitent Sinners. And he *who came into the World to save Sinners*, shall himself at the last Day condemn 'em with this dreadful Sentence ; *Depart from me, Ye cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels*. Certainly the Fear of a Wretch stung with the Terrors
of

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of Conscience under the Gospel must be Infinitely more insupportable, than either by Natural Light or Revelation itself of the Law he could have conceiv'd ; both for the clearer Certainty he has, that all these Threats shall unavoidably be fulfill'd, and for the infinitely more Afflictive Nature of the Punishments themselves, both for Intensity of Pain and Eternity of Duration; aggravated further and still enhanc'd with the bitter Sense of that great Salvation and Eternal Bliss, which was proffer'd and refus'd ; and the Sinner *having*, as the Apostle speaks, *troddeu under foot the Son of God, and counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was Sanctify'd, an Unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of Grace ; there remains nothing for him, but a certain fearfull looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour him.* Heb. 10. 27.

Having thus shewn that the state of the Wicked is a state of Fear, I proceed to the

II. Proposition, That this Fear of the Wicked is far from a groundless Fear, *It shall come upon him ;* that is, what he fears shall certainly come to pass. But here I desire to be understood, not of all the Fears that I have enumerated, or that the Wicked have, for They are Infinite : Guilt is ever forming to itself frightful Ideas; and *Wicked-*

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ness, the Wise Man tells us, *condemn'd by her own Witness is very Timorous, and being press'd with Conscience is always fore-casting grievous things.* (Wisd. 17. 11.) And it is one great plague of the Wicked, *To be in great Fear there where no Fear is.* Neither indeed is it necessary, that any of the Temporal Evils that They fear should come upon them, for tho' their own Conscience punishes 'em with the present Apprehension of 'em; yet God for wise Reasons may think fit not to inflict 'em here, reserving his Entire Wrath to the day of Wrath. But that Fear, which is properly the Fear of the Wicked, and which shall surely come upon him, is the Fear of Judgment, an Expectation of a future Recompence, and Execution of such Vengeance as shall to the full answer or exceed all that ever he could Fear, containing in itself eminently and virtually all kinds of Evil to all Eternity. And that this Fear shall come upon him, There is

1st, The highest Probability, from Reason.

2^{dly}, The most undoubted Certainty, from Revelation.

And *First*, for this very Reason, namely, that there are Naturally imprinted upon the Mind of Man these Apprehensions of Future Reward and Punishment, it is highly probable that there shall be such. Now because the whole stress of this Argument will

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will lye upon these Apprehensions being Natural, it will be necessary not only to say they are so, as has already been said, but to prove that they must be so. And I think they may be made out so to be,

1st. By their being Universal. No Age nor Country so Remote or Barbarous but has had some Sense or Feeling of them; and tho' it should be granted that there have since the beginning of the World been some few Atheists, that have never had these Fears upon 'em, which is shrewdly to be suspected, and rather to be believ'd, that they had stifled 'em, or even while they felt 'em disguis'd and disown'd 'em; yet such few and rare Examples are to be look'd on, rather as Deviations from Nature, than the Standard or Measure of it: and That concluded to be Natural, which, bating Monsters which among all the works of Nature sometimes happen, is else Universal and Common to the whole Kind. This is a general Rule to prove any thing Natural; But this Fear has in it besides something particular. For tho' Common and Universal Consent may not be the best Argument in the World for such things as gratify Men in their Ease and Sensual Appetites; yet in such their Opinions as are cross to their Pleasure or Worldly Interests, it must argue such to be from some Natural Impression

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upon their Mind, which they must believe and cannot otherwise chuse.

2dly, That they are Natural, may be prov'd, because they are the *first* Notions of Mankind, the first Principles all Men assent to without difficulty or dispute; the first Principles that Atheists themselves did Naturally Believe, and if they do not still, 'tis the Effect of great Industry and Violence that they don't. They are Antecedent to all Laws, and therefore not, as some would have it, the Contrivance of Princes or Politicians to keep the People in awe. And that they were before all Laws is Evident, because they are grounded upon *that* which is before all Laws, Namely, the Eternal Essential difference between Good and Evil, which difference all the Lawgivers in the World can no more make, than they can a Man. Besides, were these Fears the Contrivances of Wise Kings or Crafty Statesmen to cheat the Vulgar into Subjection; then they, who were in the Plot, would be free from them themselves; but this is so far from being true, that neither the greatest Princes, nor the wisest Politicians, by their Power or their Wisdom, can defend themselves from 'em; but stand equally at least expos'd to 'em, if not more than the meanest of the common Herd. Neither are they the Inventions of Priest-craft (as some are pleas'd

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to call it) for the same reason; and for this farther, That tho' it be granted that the Credulity of Mankind may be impos'd upon; and superstitious, unreasonable Fears be super-induc'd; yet this rather proves that there is such a Natural Principle, which cunning and designing Men may manage to their own Advantage, and engraft upon it what they please. For if they had not found ready to their hands such a Prone-ness in all Mankind to Believe a Future State, they could never have so abus'd it as some of them have done.

3dly, That they are Natural, may be prov'd by this, that they stick so close to our very Nature and the Frame of our Being, that they cannot without extreme Violence (if at all) be rooted out of it. For hardly will it be found that the most obstinately Wicked, who with their utmost Study and Endeavour have apply'd themselves to the suppressing and disbelieving these troublesome Notions, could ever so wholly stifle 'em, but that they would be continually rising up in their Minds and pursuing them. A Man may by various Business and Diversions, or by a continual flying for Refuge from himself into Company, shake off for a while all these Melancholy Reflections; or by a course of Debauchery stupify his Mind and make it quite insensible. But alas!

such

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such a One's Fear is not Dead but Sleepeth ; and whatever occasion makes the Man come to himself again, Rouses that too and wakens it afresh, more outrageous and tormenting than before.

The great difficulty of getting rid of this Principle is also an Argument, that it did not come only by Education, as some would have us Believe: For if we had these Notions only by being taught, Institution might as easily root out as plant 'em; which we find it cannot, tho' all other Errors of Education may be and are frequently corrected by Reason and Experience. What then should be the cause, except the congruity in the things themselves, that meer Teaching should be able to express these Notions, and not be as sufficient to Deface them again? Especially considering the Advantage on this side, from the Natural Repugnancy we have against any thing that brings disquiet to our Minds. And surely nothing can bring more, than the Fear which follows upon Guilt. But tho' there have been several witty Men and shrew'd Philosophers in all Ages, who have bent all their Parts this way, to Banish from among Mankind this Fear; yet with all their Wit and Skill, and all the Lusts and Interests of a wicked World on their side, they could never effect it. Nay, it is to be doubted, whether ever yet there has
been

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been One Man that has been absolutely freed himself from it. It happening for the most part, that they who would perswade others, that these Notions are Vain and Imaginary without any Foundation in Nature, are themselves the most assaulted with them. This therefore being the Common and Universal, the First and Inartificial, the Inseparable and Unconquerable Apprehensions of Mankind, must be concluded to be Natural.

Now this being obtain'd, namely, that the Presage of Punishment for Sin in a Future State is Natural to the Soul of Man, I think it very reasonable to conclude that there is such a State; for how can there be a Natural Fear of what is not in Nature? we may as reasonably suspect the Truth of our Eternal Senses, of Hearing, Seeing, or Feeling, as the first genuine inborn Sentiments of our Mind; for if Man was made by God, who is Eternal Truth, the Natural Sense of our Minds must be as true and certain as our Bodily Senses are; and to say that we are deceiv'd by *That*, that is, by a Principle, not of our own forming to our selves, but stamp'd upon us and born within us, is dangerously to reflect upon the very Author of our Being, the God of Nature himself, and to derogate very much both from his Wisdom and his Goodness.

For

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For God having Created Man a Free Agent, has no other way of governing him, but by the Proposals of Reward and Punishment. Force and Compulsion can't be us'd without making him a different sort of Creature from what he was made, by destroying his Liberty. Therefore Hopes and Fears are the only means proper to work effectually upon Human Nature, and Therefore, they must be True, or else we must have a very unworthy Concept of the Infinitely Wise God; namely, that he hath contriv'd the Nature of one of his best and noblest Creatures, after such a manner, as to make it incapable of being govern'd without Falsehood and Deceit. We find that he has endu'd all other of his Creatures with such *inward* Principles, as are most fit to promote the Perfection of their Kinds, and to preserve 'em from Injuries from without. The Beasts of the Field and the Birds of the Air trust that Instinct he has implanted in 'em, and are never deceiv'd by it; but by its direction fearing and shunning what is hurtful, and desiring and pursuing what is useful to 'em, follow a true and safe and an unerring Guide. And can it be credible that in the Nature of Man only, for whose sake most of those were made, he should have fix'd such kind of Principles as contain in 'em meer Cheats and Delusions?

Further,

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Further, As there is no Man wholly free from these Fears of a Future State, so there is no other Creature besides Man, that has such kind of Fears; and if these are all imaginary and groundless, has not God Created Him in a much worse Condition than the Beasts that perish? Is it agreeable to that Goodness as well as Wisdom, by which he has fram'd all his other Works in such admirable Perfection, that he should Create one only Creature, and that Him who seems to be Lord of all the Rest, to be a perpetual and unnecessary Burden and Torment to himself, and to wear out a miserable Life in needless Anxiety and vain fear of Dreams, Shadows and Impossibilities? This I judge sufficient to prove, that from the very Apprehensions that Men generally have of Eternal Punishments after this Life, it is reasonable to infer that such shall be; and that *This Fear of the Vicked shall Come upon Him.* But

2dly, If this be so highly probable from Reason, it is put out of all doubt by Revelation.

When we have advanc'd so far by the Light of Nature, as to see how reasonable, even by these Principles only, the Expectation of just Judgments upon Sinners is; how can we have the least doubt of the Certainty of them, when in plain and express words

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words reveal'd by God, whose Word alone, without the joint suffrage of Reason and Nature, is of Authority abundantly sufficient to challenge our ready Assent and most steady Belief in things the most difficult to Apprehend? And to prove that they are so plainly Reveal'd, there needs no more than to Open the Gospel and Read. There we shall find, *a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, Blackness of Darkness, the Worm that never dieth, and the Fire that never goeth out*, ordain'd for the Wicked for ever and ever. And however Bold some Men may have made with these repeated, positive, peremptory Declarations of Scripture, in suggesting that God is not oblig'd to Execute what he Threatens, that these Menaces are only to secure the good Government of the World, and to scare Mankind and to keep them in awe, but may be remitted or relaxed at his Will and Pleasure; I think it the Duty of all those whose Errand it is, *knowing the Terrors of the Lord to persuade Men*, to keep up a more awful and reverend Esteem of God's Veracity, Immutability, Justice and Honour in the Minds of Men, than to suffer the least doubt, whether, when he, as a wise Lawgiver and a just Judge so solemnly enacted and decreed for Impenitent Sinners the Everlasting Torments of Hell Fire, was in Earnest or no? Let us hear but a few Texts of Scripture

to

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to this Point ; *God is not a Man that he should Lye, nor the Son of Man that he should Repent, Hath he said and shall not be do it, or hath he spoken, and shall not be make it good?* Numb. 23. 19. *The Strength of Israel will not Lye nor Repent, for he is not a Man that he should Repent.* 1 Sam. 15. 29: *I am the Lord, I change not.* Mal. 3. 6. *In Him is no variableness nor shadow of Turning.* James 1. 17. and *he cannot deny himself.* 2 Tim. 2. 13. And if so, then it is most infallibly true, that *the Fear of the Wicked, Even the Eternal Torments of Hell, that his own guilty Mind presages, and the just Judge of the World has denounc'd, shall come upon him.*

I should now proceed from this fearful and miserable Estate of the Sinner, to shew you the happy Condition of the Righteous, how full of ravishing Desires his Soul is, and how well grounded his Hopes of Immortality. This would raise our Spirits from the Damp that these melancholly, but important Considerations, may have brought upon 'em, and open a New and Bright Scene of Comfort and Joy and Glory. But time will not permit, I must therefore only make as short an Application as may be of what has been said.

Since then the Wicked is in this Life tortur'd with continual Trouble and Fear; what Care, what Caution can we think too much,

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much, to escape, if possible, or to get rid, as soon as may be, of so grievous, so afflicting a Condition as this must needs be, even tho' all these Fears *were idle* and vain and never should come to pass? But since This *Dread* is but the Forerunner and Harbinger of that black Despair, that shall seize the Soul hereafter and prey upon it to all Eternity; what Folly, what Stupidity, what Madness is it, to defer but One Moment, the casting out this Disturber at once of all our present Quiet, and the Earnest of Eternal Horror to come? And there is but One way to effect this: *If thou prepare thine Heart and stretch out thine Hands towards Him; If Iniquity be in thy Hand, put it far away, and let not Wickedness dwell in thy Tabernacle: For then shalt thou lift up thy Face without Spot, Tea, thou shalt be steadfast and shalt not Fear.* Job 11. 13, 14. Let us therefore now begin to be Wise and Happy, let us immediately set upon a Work of so mighty Consequence, let us wash away by Repentance that Guilt, which is our perpetual Tormentor here; and, if not remov'd, will continue exercising the same Tyranny over us to all Eternity. And having made a Reconciliation with our Consciences by a Reformation of our Lives, ever after remember, to treat this great Principle within us with all Reverence and Awe, Listening always to its first Stirrings and Intima-

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Intimations, its first hints and whispers in our Hearts, Lest from a friendly, tho' faithful Monitor, it turn first an accusing and aggravating Witness, and proceed to be a Severe and Inexorable Judge. *And if our Heart Condemn us, God is greater than our Heart and knoweth all things.* But Beloved, if our Heart Condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, then may we lift up our Heads with Joy and Triumph at the great Day; and in the mean while, all guilty and distracting Fears being banisht, enjoy a Taste of that Peaceful Bliss here, which we hope to be fully satisfy'd with hereafter. Then we shall to our unspeakable Comfort find, that both as to our Present and Future State, what is Foretold by the Prophet shall be verify'd, *The Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for Ever.*

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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I JOHN II. 4, 5.

He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in Him.

But whoso keepeth his Words, in Him verily is the Love of God perfected.

THE two commanding Faculties of the Reasonable Soul, and which distinguish it from that of the Brutes that perish, are the Understanding and the Will; and of these two Noble Faculties the Noblest Acts are Knowledge and Love, the One shining like Light in the Understanding, the Other burning like

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like Fire in the Will ; and of these two, the One has Truth, and the Other Goodness, for its proper Object ; in which it is exquisitely delighted, and continually employ'd. Now God being *Original Truth*, and *Essential Goodness* ; Truth in so Eminent a manner, that Nothing else is True, but as it is conformable to the Primitive Ideas, which are ever present in his Eternal Mind ; and Goodness so absolute, that nothing besides is Good, but by participation of That which is ever streaming forth from his inexhaustible fulness ; it unavoidably follows, that to Know God is the highest Excellence of our Understanding, and to Love him the utmost Perfection of our Will. To aspire therefore to the attainment of these chief accomplishments of a Rational Being ; and in order to that, to enquire into the Nature of them, is without question both our greatest Privilege and most bounden Duty. Now both of these are here treated of by the Apostle in my Text, And who so qualify'd to instruct us in the *Knowledge* of God, as St. *John* the Divine ? Who so fit to explain to us the Nature of *Love*, as the Disciple whom *Jesus* lov'd ? and it is he, that tells us, that the Only *True Knowledge*, and the Only *Perfect Love* is Obedience. Obedience is so much the Perfection both of the Knowledge and Love of God, so properly the

Center

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Center to which they both tend and in which they both meet, that from their agreeing in this one Third, and receiving both their Spirit and Life, as it were from this common Principle, The Apostle seems to look upon 'em as all One, to confound the One with the Other. For as soon as he had laid it down for a Rule, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar*, He immediately subjoins, *But whoso keepeth His Word, in Him is the Love of God perfected*. Where the Natural Connexion shews us, that He uses these words, as if they were Synonymous and Expressive of the same Thing. So impossible it seem'd, to this burning as well as shining Light, to Know God and not to Love Him too. But how inseparable soever they may seem to be, as often meeting in the same Subject; yet they may be consider'd by the Mind as distinct, both as to the manner of their Operations, which are not only different but directly Opposite to that of each other, and as to their Precedency or Priority, whereby Knowledge both in Nature and Grace goes before Love. As to their manner of working, the Philosophers tell us, and we may our selves observe, that in the Operation of Knowledge, the Things that we apprehend move as it were and transport themselves towards us, in a manner as if they went out of their proper place

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to range themselves in our Understanding; On the contrary, in the working of Love, our Soul does as it were go out of it self, eager to be join'd with that it Loves. Thus the things that we know, we make our Own, and take possession of, as it were, as they flow into our Understanding; but the things that we Love make us their Own, take possession of Us, thro' the Affection by which we willingly give up our selves to them. Thus by the Knowledge that God is pleas'd to Communicate of himself, He comes into Our Soul and gives himself to Us; and on the other side, we make ourselves His, and give our selves to Him, by the means of that Love we bear to him. But his Goodness being Infinitely greater, and bearing no proportion or comparison to the scantyness and weakness of that of his Creatures; in this Entercourse between God and our Souls, He ever is the first, He ever prevents our Backwardness and Coldness, which is the Reason that Faith is ever produc'd before Charity, Knowledge before Love; since God always gives himself first to Us, before we can give our selves to Him.

But waving these Speculations, which may perhaps seem too nice; since our Holy Apostle, who best understood their Nature, joins them both together, or indeed makes them all one in the words of my Text, calling
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That the Love of God in the latter, which he had call'd Knowing him in the former Verse ; I shall forbear further to distinguish them, but sum up both together in Love. Both because by the whole Tenour of each of these Epistles, *That* seems to be chiefly intended by the Apostle, and because Love naturally and unavoidably presupposes and includes Knowledge. For tho' we may know many things, as we are assur'd the Devils do even God himself, without Loving ; yet it is impossible to Love without Knowing, as impossible as it is also, either to Know or Love God aright without keeping his Commandments. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his words, in him verily is the Love of God perfected.*

From which words I shall endeavour to shew,

I. That Obedience is the Perfection of the Love of God.

II. That on the other hand, the Love of God only can make our Obedience Perfect.

III. And *Lastly*, Lay before you the Infinite Obligations which we have to the Love of God, and earnestly exhort you to express it in keeping his Commandments.

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I. Obedience is the true and perfect Love of God, which consists not in suddain transient Acts of Complacency and Delight in his Perfections ; but a firm purpose and settled Resolution to perform his Will. To make this a little more distinct , we may observe, that God may be said to be lov'd by us in a double manner ; either consider'd in his Nature as he is the chiefest Good, or in the exercise of his Dominion as he is the supreme Lawgiver of the World. The Love of God as he is the chiefest Good, is a desire of Union with God , and enjoying the Divine Goodness: But the Love of God consider'd as a Lawgiver, is the keeping of his Commandments. For to Love a Lawgiver, as such, is nothing else but to Obey his Laws. God consider'd in the first respect, is Lov'd Necessarily and Unavoidably ; For there is a Natural Force and Necessity , that All should Love the Highest Good, nor is it possible for any One to hate or despise Good consider'd as Good. But when we look upon God in the second Respect as a Lawgiver, commanding on one hand divers things ungrateful to Flesh and Blood, and on the other promising Eternal Rewards for the Temporal performance of them ; if we then love God it is not with a Necessary but with a Voluntary and Free Love: Because Man, being set as it were in
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the middle between the Enjoyment of the *Present Seeming Good*, with which often his Obedience to the Commandments of God will not consist, and the Hopes of the Real but Future Good, which that Obedience would procure, has freedom of choice which to prefer, and by that choice to express whether he Loves or Hates the Lawgiver and the Law. Now as things that are unavoidable and necessary, cannot be the proper Subjects of a Command, but only those that are Voluntary and in our Power; so we shall find quite through both the Old and New Testament, that whenever the Love of God is *commanded*, it is in this latter Sense; That This is the constant Scripture Notion of it, namely, an Actual performance of all his Holy Laws. Not that this by any means excludes the Love of God in the Other Sense, as he is the Fountain and Fullness of all Perfection, but rather supposes it, and has it for its Foundation: The Love of God, as the Supreme Good, being the grand incitement to Love him, as the Supreme Lawgiver. It is not to be deny'd, but with all possible Thankfulness to be acknowledg'd, that throughout the Holy Scriptures, especially in the Poetical and Devotional parts of them, the Infinite Essential Perfections of God, his Power, his Wisdom, his Goodness, and all his other Glorious
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and Gracious Attributes are in so lively Characters display'd, as must needs convince a Rational Mind, that in his Own Nature he is above all things Amiable, and that the bare Contemplation of his inherent Excellencies, can't choose but ravish and fill the Soul with unexpressible Delight and Pleasure, and enflame it with unextinguishable Love. But still I say, this is not *That* which is meant in Holy Writ, when the Love of God is Commanded as a general Christian Duty. The Scriptures, that were written for the Instruction, and accommodated to the Capacity of all Sorts, even of the meanest People, have not enjoin'd That as of indispensable and universal Obligation which is above the reach of Vulgar Understandings, and requires more abstractedness of Thought and intention of Mind than many Well-meaning, Conscientious good Christians are capable of: but openly and clearly explain themselves, whenever the Love of God is commanded as a Duty in which all Believers are alike and equally concern'd.

That first and great Commandment; as our Saviour justly styles it, *Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might*, as it was by *Moses* deliver'd, is explain'd in the words immediately following, *And these Words which I command Thee this Day, shall be in thy*

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thy Heart. Deut. 6. 5, 6. It plainly appears, that the true meaning of *Moses* here in this Command to the Israelites was only this, that with all readiness and sincerity they should pay due and entire Obedience to the Law, which he had newly deliver'd to them. And God himself in the Body of That Law, written by his own hand, teaches us what he reckons to be our *Loving him*, where he threatens that he *will Visit the Sins of those that Hate him*, that is Disobey him, *unto the Third and Fourth Generation, but shew Mercy unto Thousands in them that Love him and Keep his Commandments.* For *This is the Love of God that we keep his Commandments*, as *St. John* in his first Epistle tells us; which he had learnt from his Lord's Mouth, whose words are these in his own Gospel, *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that Loveth me.* John 14. 21. These plain and intelligible Testimonies of Scripture may give great Consolation and Peace of Mind to every True, Sincere, Sober and Obedient Christian, tho' he finds not in his Soul such Emotions and Flights, such Raptures and Extasies, as some fanciful People pretend to, and some mystical Writers would make the Love of God to consist in. If he is conscious to himself, that the general Inclination and habitual Tendency of his Heart is to keep God's Commandments; and if he

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he finds the constant aversion of his Soul to the least wilful Breach of his Law; he may from God's own Word assure himself, that he both Loves God and is Belov'd by him. Men may talk as high as they please of the Angelical, the Seraphical Lives, as they call them, of some Retir'd, Cloyster'd, Contemplative People, that have quite gone out of the World in order to Love and to Enjoy God: but sure our Lives can never be so truly Angelical, nor our Love so like that of those Blessed Spirits, as when we pay him an Obedience on Earth like to *that* which they pay in Heaven. Where, tho' they are Eternally Ravish'd with the amiable Beauty and high Goodness of that Object, that with unspeakable Joy and Delight employs their Intuitive Knowledge; yet they chiefly express their Love by being always on the Wing at his Command, by being, as the Psalmist speaks, *His Ministers that do his Pleasure; his Angels that excell in Strength, that do his Commandment, hearkning to the Voice of his Word.* Psal. 103. 20, 21. The perfectest Love of God, that ever was on Earth, and tho' on Earth, yet Equal or rather Superior to that of those Heavenly Spirits, had no other way of demonstrating and making visible it self to Mankind, but by doing his Will, as our Blessed Saviour tells us, *That the World may know that I Love*
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the Father, as the Father gave me Commandment, so I do. John 14. 31.

It is hard to think, that That should be a necessary perfection in Religion design'd for the Eternal Happiness of All, which none but Philosophers, or Men that lead the Lives of Such, I mean Sedentary and Contemplative Lives, are capable of. As if God had not the same regard to an Humble, Honest, Simple Christian, that studies diligently to serve him in a plain well meaning way, as to the most speculative Person in the World. It is the Meek and Humble Soul that Christ delights the most in, and it were well if sometimes those high Notions, bold Flights, and extravagant Expressions, which Mystical Writers so much affect, did not puff up Mens Minds with too much Spiritual Pride to deserve that Character. And how apt this Spiritual Pride which is the *Counterfeit*, is to extinguish Obedience which is the *True Love* of God, there have been deplorable Instances in another sort of Enthusiasts among us, of a much more dangerous and troublesome Spirit, not by a Pious Melancholy retir'd to the Wilderness, or by a rash Vow confin'd to the Cloyster, but by an intemperate Zeal, busy and active upon the Publick Stage of the World. Those I mean, who having appropriated all Sanctity to themselves, and taken
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upon them to be the particular Favourites of God, have under a Colour of a more than Ordinary concern for his Cause and Zeal for his Truth, Broke through and slighted his most Express and Positive Commands, even to the overthrowing of Churches, Kingdoms and States; nor thought they could give *Glory to God on High*, unless they destroy'd *Peace on Earth*, and rooted out *Good Will towards Men*. And the same Principles lye lurking still, and may, whenever Time and Opportunity shall appear favourable, break forth into the same Publick Mischiefs, the same fruitful Seeds of all manner of Wickedness; I say lye hid, whether they themselves are enough aware of it or no, in all those who have any other Notion of the Love of God, than what is consistent with an exact conformity to his whole Reveal'd Will; or think that the greatest Excess of seeming Affection can Excuse, much less Authorize or Sanctifie the least Defect of Real Obedience. And yet alas! how frequent, how lamentable are the mistakes in this Point? Is it any New or Unheard of thing to meet with Men who fancy themselves not only the highest Lovers, but the highest Belov'd of God, if they are very strict in the Observance of some Religious Duties, demure and precise in their outward Carriage, flow-
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ing with Expressions of Zeal, and eagerly contending for their Own way of Worship, tho' at the same time they have a Phari-
saical contempt of all besides themselves, and, with them, neglect *the more weighty matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith?* those indispensable Duties which God desires rather than Sacrifice, which are the *true Love* of God, and therefore expressly so call'd by St. Luke in a parallel place, where he expresses what St. Matthew calls *Judgment, Mercy, and Faith*, by *Judgment and the Love of God*. Luke 11. 42. *Wo unto you Pharisees, for ye Tithe Mint and Rue, and neglect Judgment and the Love of God.*

Are there not those, who think they have fulfill'd this first Great and Comprehensive Commandment of Loving God with all their Heart, if they are exact and scrupulous in the Duties of the first Table, tho' they slight and disregard, as meer Heathen Virtues, all those of the second? Who are very Devout towards God, but very Unmerciful towards Men; *Abhorers of Idols*, but full of *Covetousness, which is also Idolatry*; exceedingly fearful of a vain Oath, but reconcileable enough to a profitable Lye; who can after a long Prayer devour a Widow's House, and after a solemn Fast greedily drink up the Tears of the Oppressed; in short, who are of a Burning Zeal, but a Frozen Charity. Whereas if we consider
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our Saviour's Life, the perfect Pattern of Love, we shall find that he lays as great stress upon Beneficence; and Charity, and Universal good Will, and all those Duties that relate to our Neighbour, as upon those that we are bound to pay immediately to God himself. *And this Command, says St. John, we have from him, that he who Loveth God Love his Brother also; For if a Man say he Loveth God, and Hateth his Brother, he is a Liar.* 1 John 4. 20, 21.

But yet farther, has not this Spirit, that works in the Children of Disobedience, infatuated some to that degree, as to make Legal Obedience even inconsistent with Evangelical Love? to pronounce good Works not only Unnecessary to Salvation as Some, but even Pernicious, as Others have dar'd to Blaspheme. To assert that a strong Faith and Assurance, a confident Relying, and familiar Resting upon Christ, is all that is requir'd to Saintship here, or to Salvation hereafter. Willingly enough they would use Christ as their Priest, but care not to Obey him as their King; not considering what St. Peter and the other Apostles taught *Acts 5. 31.* *Him has God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour*, a Prince to give Laws to be submitted to by Obedience, as well as a Saviour to procure Redemption to be embrac'd by Faith. But these

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these it seems, who are more intimate with Christ, are not oblig'd to the observance of the Moral Law, for St. Paul has in several places told them, that the Faithful are freed from the Law, are Dead to the Law, are no longer under the Law, and such like expressions, which these unlearn'd, presumptuous Souls wrest, as they do other Scriptures, to their own Destruction. Not rightly understanding, or not duly attending to this plain Distinction, that will clear up all this Difficulty; namely, that the Law in Scripture is sometimes consider'd as a Covenant, sometimes as a Rule; and when it is spoken of as abrogated, it is taken as a Covenant of Works; but when 'tis urg'd as still in force, 'tis consider'd as a Rule of Life: so Christ has freed us from the Curse of the Law, as it was a Covenant of Works; but more strongly enforc'd the Obedience of the Law, as it is a Rule of Life. For as a Covenant, 'twas rigorous and condemning, *Do This and Live, Fail in One Tittle and Die.* That Rigour and Condemnation Christ has taken away: but as a Rule it was Equal and Just and Good, commanding nothing but what God himself did, when he was pleas'd to become Man; and that Equity and Justice and Goodness, he has by no means taken away, he has rather establish'd and confirm'd Them; *Think not*, says he himself,

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that I am come to destroy the Law, I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill; and St. Paul, Do we then make Void the Law by Faith? God forbid. Yea we establish the Law. In fine, the Duties of the Moral Law being not Good because commanded, but commanded because Good, are of indispensable and never ceasing Obligation, so exactly conformable to the Eternal Rectitude and immutable Holiness of God, the Copy not only of his Will but his Nature, that it is as impossible that God should ever abrogate or dispense with these, as it is that he should deny himself. As concerning thy Testimonies I have known long since, that thou hast founded them for ever. Psal. 119. v. 152. and again, All his Commandments are True. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in Truth and Equity. Psal. 111. 8. and our Saviour himself, Verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law. Mat. 5. 18.

Can any One therefore, who lives in opposition to these Holy Rules, think, that he can have the least pretence to any share in God's Favour, or perswade himself that he has *within* him the least Inclination or Affection towards God? No certainly; Love, which is rightly defin'd a Desire of Union with the Object Belov'd, towards that end produces ever a most natural Effect, a desire
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of Likeness, a study of Imitation and Conformity with that Perfection and Excellence, with which it is enamour'd. It is manifest Deceit therefore and Hypocrisy to pretend to Love God without endeavouring to be like him. And This none can ever hope for, but by adjusting his whole Life to those most Holy Laws of his, which as I said are not only the Arbitrary Declarations of his Will, but a Sample of his Essential Goodness, the Image and Reflection of his Divine Nature.

An Heart inflam'd with Love seeks out; and delights in what is agreeable and pleasing to the Beloved, is ever possess'd with a dread of Offending, a jealousy of Displeasing, a tenderness of Grieving the Fountain of its Delight. Is it not then an impious and absurd piece of Nonsense to imagine, that any one can be actuated by this generous and tender Affection toward God, at the same time that he is in league with his profest Enemy, the Devil, and cherishes That most, which is the only Thing in the whole World which God hates, SIN; The utmost Abomination to his Purity, the most audacious Outrage to his Adorable Majesty, the perfect Contradiction to his Deity?

This I think is too plain to be further insisted upon, and shall therefore take it for granted now with the Apostle, that

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whoever pretends to Know or Love him and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him; But whoſo keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected.

II. But Secondly; As the perfection of Love is Obedience, ſo on the Other hand is Obedience alſo perfected by Love. That is, all the Duties that we perform muſt flow from this Fountain, muſt be deriv'd from this Principle, elſe they will be of little worth, and never riſe to any degree of Perfection. Love, that *Humbled* God and made him like to Man in Nature, is That alone, which can *Exalt* Man and make him like to God in Holineſs. 'Tis this muſt give Life and Spirit to all our performances; for 'tis this alone, which will make our Obedience have all the neceſſary qualifications to make it acceptable in the ſight of God. For,

1^{ſt}, It is this that will make our Obedience ſincere; that is, will direct us to the true End and Scope, which we ought to have ever before our Eyes in all the good Actions which we perform; and that is to Pleaſe and Glorify Almighty God. How many fair Outſides, and Shews of Religion and Good Works, are there in the World deſign'd only for the World? A great many ſeemingly
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very good Actions aiming only at the Praise of Men, as our Saviour long ago has observ'd; and such as these will never be accepted by God, because they are Sacrifices without a Heart: there is wanting the true Soul and Life of all Obedience, the Love of God's Honour and Glory. For he, that for the sake of Applause, or Honour, or Interest, or any other Motive besides This, does the best Works in the World, does them not because he Loves God, but because he Loves Himself, and therefore as our Saviour speaks, *Verily in that he has his Reward.*

2^{dly}, This will make our Obedience, which is another necessary Requisite, Universal and Entire; not choosing only, and being eager for, such Duties, as are most agreeable to our Interests, or Inclinations, or Constitutions; and neglecting those, that run cross to any of these, out of a Vain and Impious thought of Compounding for Sins which we delight in, by condemning all those that we hate. No; since God's Authority, equally stamp'd upon all his Laws, is equally slighted by the breach of any; since by every Sin of what kind or degree soever, the same Majesty is violated, the same Goodness despitefully us'd, and the same Love griev'd; Love to the Lawgiver will make us Esteem every Branch of his Law, as equally Obliging.

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3^{dly}, This

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3dly, This will make our Obedience more Humble ; for the nearer we draw to God by Love , the more of his Excellence we shall discover ; and the more we see of *him*, the more humbly it will make us think of *ourselves*. *I have heard of thee*, says Holy Job, *by the hearing of the Ear, but now my Eyes have seen thee: Wherefore I abhor my self in Dust and Ashes.* Job 42. 5. 'Tis the Nature of Love as of other Fires, the higher its Flame rises, the more to Tremble. But yet this is far from bating at all of its Activity or Heat , For

4thly, This will make our Obedience Cheerful and Ready , which God highly Values and chiefly Esteems. If we knew how agreeable every Just and Virtuous Action is to the Inherent Perfections of the Divine Nature , and how much that most Excellent Being is pleas'd with such, as Resemblances (tho' very faint Ones) of his own Infinite Excellencies ; Nay had we only distant Surmises or dark Guesses, that he was herein delighted, such dim discoveries only, as Natural Light afforded of this to the Wise Men and Philosophers of Old ; Love would teach us even in such a State, without staying for any positive Law, to Offer him up, of our own Accord, such services as the Voluntary Expressions of our studying his Pleasure : and even to prevent Obedience by Love, by first making it our greatest Satisfaction

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faction to please him out of our own Choice, before it became our Duty by his Command: Much less then will Love suffer us *Now* to be Remiss, or Cold, or Backward, in his Service; *Now*, when we have such clear Revelations from himself, how we may express our Affections to him, how kindly he will Receive them and how graciously he will Reward them.

5^{thly}, Love will make our Obedience Easy. *This is the Love of God*, says St. John, *that we keep his Commandments*, and immediately adds, *and his Commandments are not grievous*. No certainly not grievous to those that Love him: * *No Service too hard, no Undertaking too difficult for Love*. And if low and earthly Love, conversant only about mean and perishing Objects, has with such wonderful Alacrity and Courage risen thro' such dangers, and overcome such difficulties, as would be incredible, were there not so many Instances of it, as all Ages are Witnesses of; How shall not the Divine and Heavenly Love of that Being, which alone is truly worthy to be lov'd, whenever it takes possession of our Hearts, break thro' all obstacles that lye in the way of our Duty, overthrow all impediments that would stop our Course towards God, and intercept our Union with the Beloved? This alone is able

* *Levis est Labor Omnis Amanti.*

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to baffle all Temptations, encounter all Dangers, soften all Hardships. And where a Mind, not fir'd with this Celestial warmth, would find innumerable hindrances and frame to itself insuperable difficulties; Love either sees or regards them not, or with undaunted Resolution and irresistible Force Conquers and Triumphs over them.

6thly, This alone can secure our Constancy and Perseverance under the severest Trials and cruellest Persecutions: This it is that can gladly dye, rather than by Offending, venture to lose that chiefest Good which it pants after and longs to Enjoy. *Many Waters cannot drown it, and it is stronger than Death.* In short, 'tis this would render our Obedience like to That, which we daily pray for, when we pray, *Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*, that is, with an Obedience Pure and Sincere and Universal and Humble and Cheerful and Easy and Zealous and Constant, as that of the Blessed Spirits above.

Lastly, Our Service to God, being produc'd by this Noble Principle, will naturally beget a just Confidence and steady Faith, that the Glorious Reward promis'd to our sincere, tho' imperfect Obedience, shall be as great as the Gospel teaches and we expect; nay infinitely greater than we can either desire or conceive. *Eye has not seen
neither*

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neither Ear has heard, neither has it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, those things which God has prepar'd for them that Love Him.

'Tis for Love we see that this glorious Recompence is laid up. This is the Substantial Reason of our Hope: and That which does otherwise seem so wonderful and amazing, (the infinite Disproportion of the Recompence and the Service, an Everlasting Crown and a far more exceeding weight of Glory for short and imperfect performances) no longer confounds our Understanding or staggers our Belief. For tho' our Works are nothing worth, yet the Affection by which they are produc'd may be of great Value in the sight of God. We know that the meanest Services, that *We* do but guess to proceed from Love, are esteem'd, even by Men that are Evil, not according to their Intrinsick Value, but the kind Affection from which we are willing to believe they flow. How much more then shall God, (who by his Infinite Wisdom is intimately Conscious to our Love of him) out of his Infinite Goodness accept of it, tho' express'd in very low and inconsiderable Services; inconsiderable upon any other Score, but that they are Hearty and Sincere? And thus knowing and accepting our good Will, reward us, not as becomes our Doings, but as befits his Grace. And when it is not
strict

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strict Justice, but most free Grace, that rewards ; and when it is not the Work that is rewarded, but the Love ; There is no reward can be too great for that most free, infinite Grace to bestow.

I shall now proceed with an earnest Exhortation to this Love of God, that I have endeavour'd, tho' very faintly for the Dignity of the Subject, to describe : and excite you to give up your Hearts and Souls, all your Powers and Affections, and the utmost Strength of them all to God, as the Chief and Only and Perfect and Infinite Good.

That God is in His Pure and Glorious Essence Infinitely Amiable ; that nothing besides him is Lovely, (any farther than it bears some impressions of his Loveliness) is the Voice of Nature itself, shines thro' all the Visible Creation, thro' all his Works and Dealings with the children of Men, and the Wise Heathens themselves could not be blind against so clear a Light.

But my purpose is not to entertain you with a Philosophical Contemplation of his Immanent Goodness, and Essential Perfections, tho' they, even by themselves consider'd, might justly claim our most exalted Affections of Admiration, Delight and Love : For God is not only the most Excellent Being in himself, but the most Beneficent

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to his Creatures ; a Good not only to be Admir'd and Contemplated, but to be Felt and to be Enjoy'd. *Thou art Good*, says the Royal Psalmist, *And dost Good*. Psal. 119. 68. I shall desire you therefore chiefly to recollect often, and seriously weigh, and studiously meditate upon His Communicated, Emanant, Diffusive Goodness, the continual Efflux of his Loving Kindness to *Us*; and then try if it be possible to deny him a return of all the Choicest, and Sweetest, and Ferventest Motions of our Souls, as the just Tribute due to his unbounden and overflowing Grace.

Now, which way soever we turn our Thoughts, whether we regard the Present Life or the Future, whether we consider ourselves as the Works of his Hands as we are Men, or of his Grace as we are Christians; or, as I may say, as the Works of our own Hands as we are Sinners; if we observe from how many Terms of Enmity and Distance God has freed us, with how many Titles of Nearness and Relation he has endear'd us, if we recollect how Absolute our Dependance is upon him, how Universal our Receipts are from him; which way soever we look, his Benefits are so far beyond our repaying by Deeds, that they are far above our acknowledgment by Words, nay beyond the very conceptions of our Heart.

For

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For so immense a Debt, that we are so far from being able to discharge, that Numbers are wanting to reckon up the Sum, and Imagination is too narrow to conceive the dignity of the least Particular of it, what return *can be* made, nay, what *does* the Universal Creditor *demand* but Love? And can we be so Ingrateful, so Insensible, so Dead, as to refuse Him This? Shall Love upon Us only, lose its Natural Power, its common Effect of begetting Love? Shall such a Love lose it? A Love so boundless, so undeserved, so free, as that wherewith God has Loved Us? *The Lord did not set His Love upon you, says Moses to Israel, because you were more in Number, but because the Lord Loved you.* Deut. 7. 7, 8. As the Almighty could describe himself by nothing but Himself, *I am that I am*; so his Love, that is Himself, *For God is Love*, can be resolv'd into no other Motive but his Love, *He Sav'd us, because he Lov'd us.* But all this, all that *Moses* could say to the *Israelites*, is yet far short of the *Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height, of the Love of Christ to us.* To be Loving and Kind and Beneficent, to those, who have not in the least deserv'd any such thing, is exceeding Gracious, is Godlike, is Divine. But to confer the highest Benefits that Sovereign Love can invent, on those that on the contrary justly deserv'd the greatest Evils
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that Omnipotent Anger could inflict; not only to remove those from us, but himself to undergo them for us, what shall we call this? It is Godlike, for we can say nothing greater; but *so* Godlike, that even of God himself, whose very Being is Goodness, who is himself Love, we could not have conceiv'd it, had we not had the most clear Revelation and most Wonderful and Gracious Experience of it. This is the highest Pitch, the Miracle, the Mystery of Love, this is the *Love of Christ*, as *St. Paul* speaks, *that passes all Knowledge*. Ephes. 3. 19.

And what is of Value enough to return for such incomprehensible Love? Nothing certainly but Love. This is a Debt that must be paid in Kind, tho' it is impossible to be paid in Degree. Blessing therefore and Praise and Thanks, to this great Lover of Souls for Condescending to be Beloved by us, nay to Command, nay to *Desire* our Love; and again, Blessing, and Praise, and Thanks to him for *teaching us how to Love him*, for giving us his Commandments, the Law of Love. Alas! how could we poor Worms be satisfy'd, (tho' we never so eagerly desir'd it) whether we did Love him as we ought a Being so superiour to our most elevated Thoughts, had He not Himself out of Infinite Compassion to our Weakness taught us, what it was to do so? *He that*
hath

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hath my Commandments and keepeth them, He it is that Loveth me.

Let us all therefore most highly Value, most earnestly Study these Commandments, this Law of his, which is the only sure Guide to direct our Affections to him, the only infallible proof of our Love of Him. Let us, like Holy *David*, make his Statutes *our Delight*, our Joy, our Riches, our *Meditation*, *our Counsellors*. And That Love that first mov'd us to study them, will receive daily increase and improvement by being conversant in them, will make us *Tast and See how Good the Lord is*, by making us every Day more and more like Him; and when we shall have such an Experimental *feeling* of the *Good* that He *is*, by *Doing* the Good that he Commands, new beams of Loveliness will continually break in upon our Spirits and attract our Wills, 'till our imperfect Love below shall receive Perfection above, and our Exercise on Earth become our Reward in Heaven. In Heaven, where not only Vice and Sin, but even meaner Virtues and Graces shall find no admittance. They shall *fail* and *cease* and *vanish*: Love only shall Enter there, and Live and Reign in the uninterrupted Fruition of what it loves to all Eternity.

To which God of &c.

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